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In Prospect

Writing amid the still-smoking ruins of post–World War I Europe, William Butler Yeats begins his stupendous poem "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," perhaps the twentieth century's greatest, by remarking that once no one ever dreamed that anyone could be so savage as to smash the sacred artworks of the ancient world—and yet barbarians arrived, and behold, the sublime works have lain in ruins for centuries. And here are the wild-eyed barbarians again, exploding our temples of optimistic and inclusive world commerce with thousands of innocents still in them, hacking off the heads of bewildered bystanders, spewing out torrents of primitive fanaticism that make the achievements of civilization and enlightenment, surrounded by this sea of darkness, seem all the more valuable and fragile by comparison.

Have we taken the measure of their evil? Abroad, yes; and we are at war with them. But here at home, we still seem to live in the illusion that no one could want to smash the civilization we have painstakingly built. In "Homeland Security? Not Yet" on page 14, Heather Mac Donald tries to wake us up. Though terrorists quite publicly announce their intention to kill us in our own country, we still behave as if it's a 9/10 world, failing to secure our porous borders, allowing political correctness to trump airline security, and not focusing domestic counter-terrorism efforts on the specifically *Islamic* terrorism that we are fighting. Meanwhile, as Peter Huber and Mark P. Mills explain, with a lucidity that makes complexity simple, our advanced urban civilization—with its banks, hospitals, computers, and the like—depends on the most exquisitely sophisticated network of power plants and transmission lines, and beginning on page 52 they offer some sound suggestions for stopping the terrorists from cutting the wires that keep the magnificent mechanism we have constructed humming.

Where does the evil that wants to destroy all this come from? Certainly history has had its share of religious fanatics whose transgression of the fundamental prohibitions, including "Thou shalt not kill," proves to them their special election and oneness with God. And certainly the last century has shown us entire regimes based on terror and killing. But as Theodore Dalrymple writes in "The Frivolity of Evil" (page 113), you don't need a totalitarian regime to promote a reign of terror; the potential for evil exists in every human heart. Civilization rests on the prohibitions that keep such impulses in check; and if a government relaxes the laws and conventions that promote self-restraint, evil flourishes, if only on the domestic scale, where every man tyrannizes his own wife and children. And so, writes Dalrymple, not a day has gone by in which he, as a doctor in a British slum, has not heard patients tell of children raped or beaten by their mothers' boyfriends, of 14-year-olds turned out by their own mothers as being in the way of their new affair, of women having their arms broken by jealous lovers, and on and on. The family may be the "little platoon" on which the social order is based; but what kind of society produces families like these—or will be produced by them?

America has its own underclass with its own broken families, of course, but as Kay S. Hymowitz reports in "Dads in the 'Hood" (page 38), there's good news and bad news on this front. The good news: black America is starting to take seriously the state of the inner-city family, and ghetto dads are trying to be fathers to their kids. The bad news: the ghetto social structure won't re-knit until the dads and the moms marry and commit to being real families—which isn't yet happening.

The messages from above, where rock stars bear kids out of wedlock or judges tell us that any kind of ménage is fine (see page 48), don't help, of course. But not long ago, as Jonathan Rose shows in his moving "The Classics in the Slums" (page 78), the poor profited from all the right messages from above, as contained in the great literary classics, which they hungrily devoured. The result: a working class often of high civilization and independent-mindedness; and, Rose reports, some inner-city teachers today get similar results by the same methods.

Finally, on page 64 we present our vision for a new Far West Side of Manhattan, to advance still further the ongoing project of civilization and enlightenment. ■

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oundings

The Truth About Iraq

Ask Iraqis about the country's situation, and you get a hopeful picture.

John Kerry is playing the prophet of doom in the most important foreign policy initiative of our generation. In Pennsylvania, Kerry described Iraq as "the wrong war, wrong place, wrong time." In New York, he opined that murderous cleric Moqtada al-Sadr "holds more sway in suburbs of Baghdad than the prime minister." In Columbus, the senator claimed to have a more accurate perspective on the situation in Iraq than did interim prime minister Ayad Allawi, whose job-approval rating of 66 percent among Iraqis, it's worth noting, is higher than Kerry's 46 percent among Americans. Kerry, of course, has never set foot in Iraq.

I spent nine months there, conducting some 70 focus groups, working on about a dozen public opinion polls, and advising the former Administrator, Ambassador Paul Bremer, on the state of Iraqi public opinion. Whatever you might hear from Kerry, Michael Moore, the mainstream media, and anyone else whose desire to defeat President Bush is more important to them than the fate of the Iraqi people, those who know best what's going on in Iraq—the Iraqis themselves—are optimistic about the future. (To help Americans understand what the Iraqi people already know, I recently founded TheTruthAboutIraq.org, which conducts statistical research in Iraq.)

Iraqis consistently say in nationwide polls that the situation in their country is improving. In polls conducted over the course of the summer, for example, more than half of Iraqis said that their country is on the right track. (Compare this with Michigan, where Governor Jennifer Granholm, a rising star in the Democratic Party, has inspired only 34 percent of residents to say that their state is on the right track.)

Other polling data are equally promising. The vast majority of Iraqis—72 percent—see the same benefits in democracy as Americans do: the hope of peace, stability, and a better life. Most polls show that a no less sizable majority of Iraqis (75 percent) are moderate democrats and want to vote for their leaders rather than have religious clerics appoint them.

In a recent speech, Kerry charged that Saddam's brutality "was not, in itself, a reason to go to war." Iraqis disagree, as should any supporter of human rights. More than 60 percent of Baghdad residents think that any price they are paying now is worth it to be rid of Saddam—a percentage that increases to 74 percent among the Shi'a sect of Islam, those most oppressed by Saddam.

These figures are easy to understand when you look at another set of statistics. In an op-ed circulated earlier this year among the more than 200 independent newspapers now published in Iraq, an Iraqi democratic activist observed that Saddam tortured and killed as many as 750,000 of his own people—more than five times the number of Japanese killed in the Hiroshima blast. Iraqis don't understand the debate about whether Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. Saddam *was* a weapon of mass destruction, in their view.

UNICEF, hardly an apologist for the Bush administration, estimates that 5,000 Iraqi children a month died of starvation and malnutrition while Saddam siphoned funds from the UN's Oil for Food program to build Superdome-size palaces and enrich French politicians. Americans are only now learning of the extent of Saddam's corruption of this humanitarian program; the Iraqis have known about it for quite some time. When asked on a poll to rate their confidence in the UN, Iraqis gave the organization a 2.9 on a scale of 1 to 4, with a 4 meaning absolutely no confidence. In contrast, the Iraqi people do have confidence in their own institutions. More than 60 percent of Iraqis tell pollsters that the government has done a good job since the June 28 handover.

Some 20,000 to 30,000 insurgents, many from outside Iraq, are trying to prevent the more than 19 million Iraqis who want democracy from achieving it. Michael Moore (who, despite what *Fahrenheit 9/11* might lead you to believe, has also never been to Iraq) might call the insurgents freedom fighters, but make no mistake: they're not fighting for anybody's freedom. They seek to oppress, whether through another Baathist-style dictatorship or a theocracy. More than 60 percent of Iraqis say that the foreign insurgents intend to destabilize their country, while 70 percent think that, regardless of their origin, the insurgents are only prolonging the nation's internal troubles.

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Soundings

John Kerry has already said that, if elected, he will begin withdrawing the troops six months after he is inaugurated, though he has offered other timetables, too. None of Iraq's autocratic neighbors has an interest in seeing a democratic Iraq succeed, and they are vigorously supporting the efforts of extremists to derail Iraqi self-government. Hastily withdrawing U.S. troops—the protectors of the political hopes of three out of four Iraqis—for political reasons would be a mistake for which we and our children would pay for decades. —*Steven E. Moore*

Give Us the Money!

President Bush's education reforms are driving the public school establishment crazy.

Many Americans vastly underestimate how much money our public schools spend, a recent Educational Testing Services survey discovered. Nearly half of those polled thought the schools spend less than $5,000 per pupil. The actual figure: about $9,000 per pupil. Why the mistaken view? Blame the teachers' unions and their allies, who bombard the public with messages claiming that schools lack funds and resources. Nothing exemplifies the disinformation effort more powerfully than the campaign launched by the newly formed National Mobilization for Great Public Schools—a coalition of advocacy groups that includes the National Education Association (the biggest teachers' union), the radical union-allied community organizer ACORN, and Moveon.org, the angry George Soros–funded outfit whose chief mission is to defeat President Bush.

The coalition's main message, touted in local organizing events, newspaper ads, and a video, falsely condemns the Bush team for slashing education funding even as the president's No Child Left Behind Act imposes expensive new federal mandates on schools. "All too often our schools are not given the resources to meet our children's needs," says the video, adding that federal aid to schools will "fall short" by $9 billion over the next five years. Meantime, the coalition is circulating a petition that exhorts the president to "increase, not cut, funding for our schools."

The coalition says that it's trying to create "Education First" voters, whose top priority will be supporting candidates who back public education. But if that were true, then its main message should be that President Bush has done more for public education than any recent president. First, federal education spending under Bush is up nearly 50 percent over the final year of the Clinton presidency, so the coalition's charge that the president is stinting the schools is just bunk. More important, though, is what the money is

GETTY IMAGES (4)

paying for. Among other welcome reforms, the No Child Left Behind Act provides money for poor kids in failing schools to buy tutoring services—not just from the public schools but also from private educational institutions, including church-affiliated groups. The act also requires schools that want federal funds to use scientifically backed curricula—above all, phonics-based reading instruction—rather than the trendy but unproven programs favored by progressive educators. Also, schools that don't achieve minimum standards of student performance will lose funding.

That the president is insisting on accountability for federal education money is what's really driving the coalition—and the education lobby—nuts. For decades, the feds have poured many billions into local schools without requiring them to show even minimal improvement in student performance—a major reason that school test scores and graduation rates have stayed flat in the United States, even though real (inflation-adjusted) spending per pupil has doubled over the last 30 years. No longer will schools get a free pass.

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Equally infuriating from the educational establishment's perspective, the president isn't emphasizing spending on the programs the union favors, such as pre-K and after-school initiatives run by the public schools themselves. Though there's no evidence that such programs help boost student performance, the education lobby loves them because they've fattened the public school bureaucracy, adding new administrators and education workers to the union ranks.

This new campaign is just the latest example of the huge gap between the rhetoric of education groups and the reality of public school spending. Consider the teacher from Cuyahoga Heights, Ohio, who complains on the coalition's video about a lack of federal education funding. What the video doesn't bother pointing out is that Cuyahoga Heights is one of the nation's richest school districts, spending about $16,000 per pupil—78 percent above the national average, and much more than other industrialized nations typically spend to educate their children.

Her testimony underscores an important truth—one that Americans may soon begin to see. For the public education lobby, no amount of money will *ever* be enough—and it should all come with no strings attached. —*Steven Malanga*

We Don't Need Car Alarms

Why won't Mayor Bloomberg ban the Number One noise pollutant?

Cities have begun taking noise pollution seriously. A new ordinance in Detroit, for example, cracks down on boom-box cars, outfitted with huge stereo amplifiers that can rumble your floors blocks away. Now in the Motor City, you'll get slapped with a fine if your car stereo can be heard over *ten feet* away. "Your freedom to play your music loudly stops at my eardrums," said Detroit council member Barbara-Rose Collins, the measure's sponsor.

New York City is no exception to this trend. This summer, New York mayor Michael Bloomberg announced a plan to "bring the city's noise code—which hasn't been updated in 32 years—into the twenty-first century," to make Gotham a bit less nerve-jangling place. Noting that noise is by far the city's chief quality-of-life complaint, the mayor commendably proposed simplifying enforcement of noise violations against barking dogs, thundering stereos, jingling ice-cream trucks, and other aural irritations by allowing police to use their own ears instead of tricky handheld decibel meters to determine if the noise is excessive. The administration sees the new code as augmenting the NYPD's anti-noise initiative, *Operation Silent Night*. Launched in 2002, *Silent Night* blanketed 24 of the most raucous city neighborhoods with sound-meter-wielding cops, resulting in more than 34,000 criminal-court summonses.

Inexplicably, the mayor has refused to do anything about the most infuriating urban noise pollutant of all: car alarms. As anybody jolted awake at 3 AM can tell you, these devices can shriek at noise levels up to 125 decibels, as loud as a jackhammer going off outside your window. Their electronic hysteria shreds civility and keeps many a New Yorker from getting a good night's sleep.

Car alarms would be hard to defend even if they did cut car-theft rates, as their makers claim. But they don't. Professional car thieves can disable audio alarms in seconds. And the false-alarm rate—upward of 95 percent—means that nobody calls the cops when an alarm goes off. Car alarm manufacturers have never been able to present any proof that their products deter crime. Now that silent and effective anti-car-theft options exist, like the factory-installed immobilizers that shut down a car's ignition system if someone tries to start it without using the right computer-encoded key, there's no reason not to sweep car alarms into history's trash heap. (See "Let's Ban Car Alarms," Winter 2002.)

Far from going after car alarms, however, the Bloomberg administration has defended them, claiming, incorrectly, that they help fight car theft. This August, the mayor vetoed a city council bill that merely sought to make illegal the installation and sale of audio alarms that blast for longer than three minutes or that are triggered by motion-detector devices—alarms whose use in the city has been against the law since 1993. The city council overrode the veto in October.

If the mayor really wants to make Gotham quieter, he should stop defending car alarms and

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instead push for a comprehensive ban on their use within city limits. With mayoral backing, a ban would likely win city council approval. It would certainly please a lot of bleary-eyed New Yorkers. And after all, we have found a more successful way of fighting crime than impotently shrieking about it. —*Brian C. Anderson*

I Wed Thee, and Thee, and Thee

If homosexual marriage, then polygamy?

Same-sex marriage advocates tend to jeer at the argument that allowing such unions will open a smorgasbord of marital practices. They insist that what interests them is not to transform the institution radically but only to welcome their homosexual friends, neighbors, and relatives to its benefits. A few recent developments suggest that they're dead wrong.

Consider a recent *USA Today* op-ed by Jonathan Turley, arguing that it's time for polygamous marriage to receive constitutional protection. However misguided, Turley is no bomb thrower. He is a Georgetown University prof, a prolific scholar, and a frequent television talking head on legal issues. Here, he simply underscores two points that homosexual advocates downplay: first, that the Supreme Court's 2003 *Lawrence* decision, striking down anti-sodomy laws, "recognized the constitutional right to engage in any form of consensual sexual relation," presumably including multiple partners; and second—and somewhat more plausibly, given that *Lawrence* is about private sexual practices and implies nothing about marriage—that *Reynolds* v. *United States*, the 1878 Supreme Court case that upheld a ban on polygamy in the United States territories, is so filled with racist innuendo and cavalier attitudes about religious freedom that it would be unlikely to pass muster today.

Turley isn't just playing an intellectual parlor game. Polygamy advocacy groups—and yes, Virginia, they do exist—have been following the same-sex marriage debate as closely as the Iranian mullahs are following our presidential election. "Polygamy is the next civil rights battle," is the motto on the Pro-polygamy.com website, a "Christian polygamy" group. (Christian polygamists are evangelicals who base their beliefs on the Old and New Testaments; by contrast, Mormons cite extra-biblical revelations of their founder, Joseph Smith.) A Mormon group, "Principle Voices of Polygamy," is "encouraging empowerment of individuals and families from the polygamous culture to secure for themselves equal representation and civil rights."

More disturbing still, several legal cases pleading the cause of polygamy are already in motion. In *Bronson* v. *Swensen*, a Utah threesome has filed suit against the Salt Lake County Clerk's office for denying them a marriage license. Their attorney, who, like Turley, specializes in civil rights cases, argues that if Texas cannot criminalize sodomy, Utah should not be able to criminalize polygamy—though again, why the right to commit sodomy implies anything about marriage, let alone marriage with multiple or same-sex partners, is unclear. In another case, Tom Green, facing a prison sentence because he was "married" to four women (though he never sought a license with any of them), is appealing to the Supreme Court on the grounds that the state has violated his religious freedom.

Same-sex marriage supporters often make a powerful case by pointing, say, to the man denied the chance to say good-bye to his dying lover or to the beaming faces of gay "newlyweds" in Massachusetts. Opponents, though, fretting about "undermining society's bedrock institution," have had to labor in the realm of abstract argument. That may be about to change.

—*Kay S. Hymowitz*

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Soundings

Rather Not

The end of an era

"The criticism," growled NBC's Tom Brokaw, went "beyond any factual information." Indeed, it was nothing less than "a political jihad." ABC's Peter Jennings, equally outraged, chimed in: "I don't think you ever judge a man by only one event in his career."

They were speaking, of course, about *l'Affaire* Dan Rather, rising in defense of their fellow elite anchor. Trouble is, Jennings was right. We shouldn't judge a man by a single event; we should judge him by *all* his biases and errata. These, Rather has in overplus. (Researchers may visit *Ratherbiased.com*, where they'll find them carefully compiled and analyzed.)

Brokaw, by contrast, was absolutely wrong. The criticism—that Rather had used forgeries to claim that George W. Bush had received special indulgences while serving in the National Guard during the Vietnam War—turned out, as everyone now knows, to be factual. The CBS man had dealt his viewers a pack of lies.

You didn't have to be Sherlock Holmes to see that a 1970s-era typewriter could not have produced the CBS document. Bloggers almost immediately recognized the phoniness—in contrast to the CBS News division. Shortly afterward, the sky fell in at Black Rock, and an investigatory panel went to work.

CBS isn't the only one of the Big Three to have its bias exposed this election season. In early October, ABC's respected political news director Mark Halperin wrote a confidential memo, immediately leaked to the blogosphere, that instructed his staffers to go harder on Bush than Kerry. "Kerry distorts, takes out of context, and mistakes all the time," Halperin observed, but these are "not central to his efforts to win"—unlike Bush, on his view. Halperin continued, "We have a responsibility to hold both sides accountable to the public interest, but that doesn't mean we reflexively and artificially hold both sides 'equally' accountable."

No doubt Jennings is now squirming almost as much as Rather, whose Nielsens have nose-dived. And with good reason. Network managers are now painfully aware that they can no longer get away with false claims and pat denials. Fox News dominates cable TV (during the most recent ratings period, it averaged more viewers than CNN, CNN Headline News, MSNBC, and CNBC *combined*, and during the Republican convention, it even beat the Big Three networks, a first), while the blogosphere—which brought down editor Howell Raines at the *New York Times* a year ago—is an 800-pound gorilla with lots of time and zero tolerance for arrogance.

No wonder the network newsmen are in lockstep about the "people in pajamas"—the bloggers, who are becoming the fastest-moving and most important organs of analysis in the country. Napoleon would have recognized the syndrome. "There are two levers for moving men," he noted. "Interest and fear." Brokaw and Jennings want to preserve their fiefs for just a little while longer (Brokaw retires on December 1).

Après les hommes d'anchors, la déluge.

—Stefan Kanfer

Spinning the Economy Down

For the liberal media, a GOP president's economy is always crummy.

Liberal media bias can sometimes be laughably blatant, as in the late-September Associated Press hit job masquerading as a news story, headlined BUSH TWISTS KERRY'S WORDS ON IRAQ, which could easily have been written by the Kerry campaign. Oh, wait—maybe it was: as the *Powerline* blog reminded everybody, the AP reporter who wrote the story, Jennifer Loven, is married to Kerry environmental advisor Roger Ballentine and has dumped on the president before. But such bias can also be subtler, with significant real-world consequences.

Economic coverage is a prime example, say American Enterprise Institute researchers Kevin Hassett and John Lott. In a new econometric study, the two authors methodically surveyed headlines in hundreds of newspapers and AP reports on unemployment, GDP, retail sales, and durable goods orders going back to 1985, and found them to be much gloomier overall when a Republican sat in the White House, regardless of the economic data the stories reported. For

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the same kind of economic news, Republican presidents received about 20 to 30 percent less positive coverage from all papers, and 20 to 40 percent less positive coverage from the nation's ten leading papers. Among the most biased news sources were—no surprises here—the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

This "partisan gap," as Hassett and Lott call it, distorts public perceptions of the economy. Positive headlines actually had more to do with whether people thought an economy was getting better than the underlying technical economic data, the authors unsurprisingly discovered.

All year long, economists have wondered why the public remains grumpy about the Bush economy, whose growth rate matched any 12-month period of the Clinton presidency. A July AP/Ipsos Public Affairs survey, for example, found that 57 percent of the respondents thought that the economy had lost more jobs than it had gained over the previous six months, when in fact it had added more than 1 million jobs. Headlines like the *Chicago Tribune*'s, greeting news of robust 4 percent economic growth during the fourth quarter of 2003—GDP GROWTH DISAPPOINTS; JOB WORRIES LINGER—likely have something to do with the public mystification.

—*Brian C. Anderson*

Torn Jeans

The politics of a fashion statement

At the nurses' station in the hospital ward where I work hangs a pinup of British soccer star David Beckham, perhaps the world's most famous sports figure. His annual income is in the region of $25 million.

The picture has him wearing a white T-shirt and a pair of designer jeans, carefully torn at the left knee, with a loose thread hanging down. This hint at rags is a fashion, or affectation, that I find offensive. It is an insult to all those who must wear clothes with holes in them for lack of better ones: of whom, sadly, there are still many millions in the world.

When I think back to the heroic efforts I have witnessed of poor Africans to make themselves clean, smart, and tidy for special occasions—efforts that filled me with admiration—I feel a visceral anger at this frivolous assumption of false poverty by people who have never had to wear rags in their lives. Once, only Marie Antoinette played at being a shepherdess; now, it is a mass phenomenon.

Do the people who affect torn clothes really want to be taken for poor? A vocation for actual poverty is actually quite uncommon. Do they imagine instead that they are expressing solidarity with the poor by wearing pants with holes? At the very least, the assumption of torn clothes suggests an inchoate idea, or complex of ideas, about poverty and the poor.

It implies a residual guilt at not being impoverished, at being rich enough to afford clothes without holes. Yet why should anyone feel guilt about being rich, unless his wealth were ill-gotten? Today, though, as a result of cultural indoctrination, many people, particularly the young, believe that all wealth is fundamentally ill-gotten. On this view, one can only accumulate wealth at someone else's expense. Therefore, if you wear untorn clothes, you in effect are condemning someone else to wear rags, for one man's wealth is another man's poverty. Best, then, to side (symbolically at least) with the wretched of the earth by wearing rags.

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Of course, jeans with pre-torn holes are often pricier than jeans without. No doubt, laborers toil somewhere in the Third World to produce these carefully ripped garments. It is an irony that a taste for symbolic poverty provides employment to people who might have to wear real rags.

But the idea behind the affectation—that economies are zero-sum games, that my wealth is your poverty, and vice versa—has done incalculable harm, far greater than any slight economic benefit that it might have brought to the tearers of jeans. One could say, in fact, that a high proportion of the twentieth century's catastrophes resulted from this fundamentally stupid notion.

Gestures are important, of course; those of solidarity and compassion may bring relief, even without material benefit. But cheap, thoughtless, or condescending gestures may enrage. Rich people do poor people no favor by wearing rags, even by famous designers.

—*Theodore Dalrymple*

What's the Matter with Thomas Franks?

The liberal author's got Kansas all wrong.

Kansas is a reliable "red" state, won by George W. Bush in a landslide four years ago and expected to go the GOP's way again easily this November. The state's rock-solid support of Bush and other conservative candidates has sent at least one of its native sons, political commentator Thomas Franks, into paroxysms of rage. In his new book, *What's the Matter with Kansas*, Franks argues that all those Jayhawk State rubes have got things backward: they've continued to vote Republican as the state goes through real economic hardship, even though, by doing so, they're voting against their own economic interests. The book is a big hit with left-leaning commentators and has sold very well, making the author something of a celebrity on the talk-show circuit.

In purple prose, Franks paints a grim picture of the state and its towns. Kansas is "pretty much in a free fall," he informs us, and as a result of its economic devastation, it's "a civilization in the early stages of irreversible decay." The cause of all this decline, he says, is modern capitalism, especially as practiced by all those businessmen-GOPers. Kansas is "burning on a free-market pyre," he writes apocalyptically. Things are especially bad in his old hometown of Shawnee, where, during his visits, he no longer sees anyone in the streets. Instead, "heaps of rusting junk and snarling rottweilers" blight the landscape.

So Kansas is sinking into economic oblivion, right? Well, Franks's characterization of the Jayhawk State is completely—bizarrely—at odds with the facts. Kansas's economy has actually outpaced the nation's for years now. Throughout the 1990s and the first part of this new decade, Kansas had a lower unemployment rate than the U.S. economy as a whole. In fact, when the country's unemployment rate dipped below 5 percent from 1997 to 2001, Kansas's fell under 4 percent—a level so low that economists basically consider it full employment. Overall, the state's economy added 256,000 new jobs during the 1990s, a 24 percent growth rate, compared with a 20 percent national gain in the same period. Even when the economic slowdown set in and the recession finally hit in 2002 and 2003, Kansas lost jobs at a slower rate than the national economy did.

The objects of Franks's particular concern, his hometown of Shawnee and the rest of Johnson County, have done especially well. For three years in the 1990s, the Shawnee area's unemployment rate actually dipped below 3 percent, making it one of the tightest labor markets anywhere. When the recession hit, Shawnee's unemployment rate did rise but still stayed below the national economy's. And though Franks describes the place as practically desolate, Shawnee's population grew by a robust 27 percent during the 1990s. Even more astonishing, today, only 3.3 percent of its citizens live below the poverty level, compared with about 12.5 percent nationally. "It's possible his view of us is outdated," says Jim Martin, executive director of the Shawnee Economic Development Council, in classic midwestern understatement.

Regardless of Kansas's economic performance, Franks's main thesis—that people who are struggling economically should be voting as liberals, not conservatives—is dubious. As an editorial in the *Wichita Eagle* observed: "There's nothing wrong with many Kansans wanting to hold onto a little

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more of their paychecks . . . or preferring that when they need help it comes from their family, their church, their community—not an intrusive federal government." But what's really astounding is that Franks, who offers little in the way of economic data, would base his argument on such blatant falsehoods. To Franks's liberal prejudices, something may be the matter with Kansas, but it's sure not its economy. —*Steven Malanga*

Inclusive Failure

Seeking equality, England dumbs down its schools, to nobody's benefit.

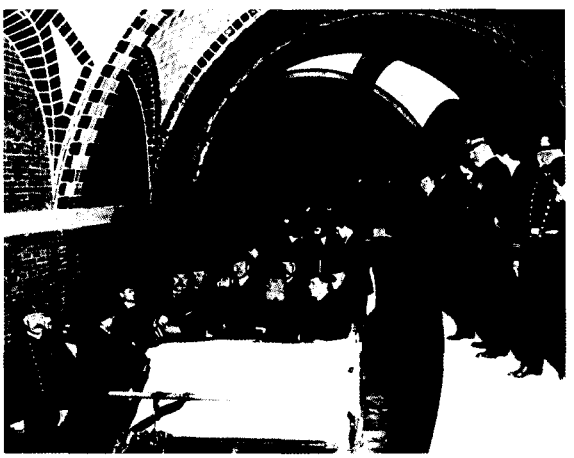
It is an axiom of modern British governance that if a policy does not achieve its stated aims, one does not conclude that the policy has failed but rather that it requires greater rigor in implementation. Thus, if educational policies aimed at creating a more equal society have brought about a more unequal one, we must strengthen and extend thm.

For example, the abolition of selective public secondary schools, on the grounds that they were socially divisive, resulted in a sudden halving of the proportion of public school students at the best universities. The reason is easy to discern: a catastrophic fall in academic standards in the public schools. The mingling of the brightest and the best with the dimmest and the worst has not uplifted the dim and worst; it has brought down the bright and best. Only someone with little knowledge of humanity, and of youth in particular, would have expected anything different.

Though Prime Minister Tony Blair recently bought a house in London for $5.5 million, the Labour government he heads remains demagogically obsessed by the need to appear to be promoting social equality. It has set quotas for universities for the admission of students from the lower (and lowest) social strata. Universities that fail to meet the targets will receive fines, as 17 of them recently did. Those schools' admissions proved too bourgeois—that is, not sufficiently socially inclusive.

The purpose of universities, on the government's view, is not to educate or to stimulate scholarship and research: it is to kindle the self-esteem of the underclass. Whether this result flows from the raising of academic achievement among the poor or the lowering of it among the rich is a matter of complete indifference to the government. Since the second approach is far easier, it has taken place.

Except, oddly enough, in Northern Ireland, where "socially divisive" selective secondary education still exists. We see no decline there in the



proportion of university students coming from the poorest homes: in fact, it is the highest in the country. In other words, high academic standards and firm discipline favor the poor.

Not that the government will heed this lesson: What has progressive England to learn from backward Ireland? Besides, soon it will not matter who gets a university education: the universities will have become so corrupted that degrees will be worthless. In a desperate and short-term attempt to generate income, for example, British universities now routinely sell their degrees to gullible foreigners. I teach a university course on toxicology, with about half the class made up of foreign students. Here is the university-set standard for a passing essay of 50 percent (actually 46 percent, since teachers must round marks upward, to the nearest multiple of five): "A just satisfactory answer that may omit some major points; incomplete but showing some sound knowledge and limited understanding; some errors."

After all, no one wants to pay $30,000 a year in tuition just for the opportunity to fail.

—*Theodore Dalrymple*

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Homeland Security? Not Yet

Political correctness still makes us pull our punches.

Heather Mac Donald

In 1997, government attorneys worried that a proposed anti-terrorism system for airlines might work too well. Although an early prototype of the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System (CAPPS I) assiduously avoided collecting information about a passenger's national origin, religion, race, or sex in assessing the risk that he might be a terrorist, civil rights lawyers in the Justice and Transportation Departments fretted that the system might still be "discriminatory." It *still* might pull aside "too many" people of Arab descent by looking at, say, frequent travel to the Middle East, among other risk factors.

Given the previous two decades of Islamic terrorism, such an outcome would have been appropriate. But the rights enforcers warned that airlines could face penalties if they selected more than three passengers of the same ethnicity for additional scrutiny on any given flight. So the prototype architects built random hits into their program to ensure that airline screeners would devote as much time searching Lutheran matrons from Minnesota as young men from Saudi Arabia.

Public-policy obsession with avoiding any possible charge of racism was the luxury of an age that believed that the United States faced no greater danger than the bigotry of its own people. Though such thinking should have been cast aside after 9/11, it has not been. The incoherence that existed at the origin of CAPPS I plagues anti-terrorism efforts today. In 1997,

Despite our well-trained air marshals, airport screening remains lax.

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the government recognized the reality of Islamic terrorism by building some Islamic-centric features into the program while simultaneously repudiating the consequences of that reality—stricter scrutiny for Muslims. Currently, from immigration enforcement to intelligence gathering, government officials continue to compromise national security in order to avoid accusations of "racial profiling"—and in order to avoid publicly acknowledging what the 9/11 Commission finally said: that the "enemy is not just 'terrorism,' [but] *Islamist* terrorism." This blind anti-discrimination reflex is all the more worrying since radical Islam continues to seek adherents and plan attacks in the United States.

The anti-discrimination hammer has hit the airline industry most severely—and with gruesome inappropriateness, given the realities of 9/11 and the Islamists' enduring obsession with airplanes. Department of Transportation lawyers have extracted millions in settlements from four major carriers for alleged discrimination after 9/11, and they have undermined one of the most crucial elements of air safety: a pilot's responsibility for his flight. Because the charges against the airlines were specious but successful, every pilot must worry that his good-faith effort to protect his passengers will trigger federal retaliation.

The DoT action against American Airlines was typical. In the last four months of 2001, American carried 23 million passengers and asked ten of them (.00004 percent of the total) not to board because they raised security concerns that could not be resolved in time for departure. For those ten interventions (and an 11th in 2002), DoT declared American a civil rights pariah, whose discriminatory conduct would "result in irreparable harm to the public" if not stopped.

On its face, the government's charge that American was engaged in a pattern of discriminatory conduct was absurd, given how few passenger removals occurred. But the racism allegation looks all the more unreasonable when put in the context of the government's own actions. Three times between 9/11 and the end of 2001, public officials warned of an imminent terror attack. Transportation officials urged the airlines to be especially vigilant. In such an environment, pilots would have been derelict not to resolve security questions in favor of caution.

Somehow, DoT lawyers failed to include in their complaint one further passenger whom American asked not to board in 2001. On December 22, airline personnel in Paris kept Richard Reid off a flight to Miami. The next day, French authorities insisted that he be cleared to board. During the flight, Reid tried to set off a bomb in his shoe, but a stewardess and passengers foiled him. Had he been kept from flying on both days, he too might have ended up on the government's roster of discrimination victims.

Jehad Alshrafi is typical of those who *were* included in the suit against American. On November 3, 2001, the Jordanian-American Alshrafi was scheduled to fly out of Boston's Logan Airport (from which two of the hijacked planes—including American Flight 77—departed on 9/11). A federal air marshal told the pilot that Alshrafi's name resembled one on a terror watch list—and that he had been acting suspiciously, had created a disturbance at the gate, and posed unresolved security issues. The pilot denied him boarding. Alshrafi was later cleared and given first-class passage on another flight.

According to DoT, the only reason American initially denied Alshrafi passage was because of his "race, color, national origin, religion, sex or ancestry." Never mind that there were at least five other passengers of Arab descent on his original flight, none of whom had been given additional screening or kept from flying. In fact, on virtually every flight on which the government claims that American acted out of racial animus, other passengers of apparent Middle Eastern or South Asian ancestry flew undisturbed—not to mention the undoubted thousands of Arab passengers who flew with American on other flights in the final months of 2001.

If DoT believes that an air marshal's warnings about a passenger's name and suspicious behavior are insufficient grounds for keeping him off a flight, it is hard to imagine circumstances that *would* justify a security hold in the department's view—short of someone's declaring his intention

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to blow up a plane. Given the information presented to the pilot, the only conceivable reason to have allowed Alshrafi to board would have been fear of a lawsuit.

And litigation phobia is precisely the mindset that DoT is hoping to cultivate in flight personnel. Ten days after 9/11, the department started rolling out "guidance" documents on nondiscrimination. While heavy on platitudes about protecting civil rights, they are useless in advising airlines how to avoid the government's wrath. The closest the department gets to providing airlines a concrete rule for avoiding litigation is a "but-for" test: "Ask yourself," advise the guidelines, "*But for this person's perceived race, ethnic heritage or religious orientation, would I have subjected this individual to additional safety or security scrutiny?* If the answer is 'no,' then the action may violate civil rights laws."

"Every pilot must worry that his good-faith effort to protect his passengers will trigger federal retaliation."

But security decisions are never that clear. A safety officer will consider many factors in calculating someone's riskiness; any one of them could be pulled out as a "but-for" element. As American's record makes clear, it is almost never the case that someone gets additional screening based on his apparent ethnic heritage or national origin alone; behavior and no-fly-list matching are key in the assessment. (In fact, about half the complainants in the government's action were not even Middle Eastern—many were Hispanic; one was a "Norwegian-Sicilian." DoT simply assumes, without evidence, that American scrutinized the men because of the mistaken belief that they were Arabs, rather than because of their behavior.) A pilot trying to apply the "but-for" test to his own security judgment will inevitably reduce the test to an easier calculus: "Deny passage to someone who is or could claim to look Muslim only under the most extreme circumstances."

In application, the government's "but-for" test reduces to a "never-ever" rule: ethnic heritage, religion, or national origin may play no role in evaluating risk. But when the threat at issue is Islamic terrorism, it is reckless to ask officials to disregard the sole ironclad prerequisite for being an Islamic terrorist: Muslim identity. American officials may still be terrified about naming the threat, but a few Arab commentators are willing to say what the Bush administration will not: "It is a certain fact that not all Muslims are terrorists, but it is equally certain, and exceptionally painful, that almost all terrorists are Muslims," wrote Abdel Rahman al-Rashed, the general manager of the influential Al Arabiya television station, after the school massacre in Beslan, Russia.

Any discussion about how the government should identify Muslim terror suspects has been couched as a referendum on "racial profiling." But "racial profiling" is irrelevant. What is at issue is religious profiling. By definition—by Usama bin Ladin's own definition when he called on all Muslims to kill Americans wherever they can find them—Muslim terrorists must be Muslim. Because religious identity is not always apparent, however, national origin or ethnic heritage should be available as surrogates. Needless to say, Muslim identity should be at most only *one* factor in assessing someone's security risk. Unfortunately, the much-heralded 9/11 Commission report, while correctly naming the nation's primary threat as "*Islamist* terrorism," contains not one word about what the proper role of Muslim identity should be in locating such terrorists, a topic evidently too hot to touch.

Years of government lawsuits over specious employment-discrimination claims have made the airlines gun-shy over "bias" issues. But American Airlines did contest DoT's discrimination action because so much was at stake. Federal law

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vests final responsibility for flight safety with the pilot. For a passel of discrimination lawyers, months after the fact, to question a pilot's good-faith judgment—made with incomplete information under great time pressure—violates a crucial principle of secure aviation.

American's defense pointed out the behavioral warning signs that had led to the 11 removals. But fighting the government civil rights complex is futile; in February 2004, the airline, while vehemently denying guilt, settled the action for $1.5 million, to be spent on yet more "sensitivity training" for its employees. American's pilots were outraged. "Pilots felt: 'How dare they second-guess our decision?'" says Denis Breslin, a pilots' union official. "We just shake our heads in shame: 'How could the government be so wrong?'"

Not satisfied with just one scalp, the Transportation Department lawyers brought identical suits against United, Delta, and Continental Airlines. While maintaining their innocence, those carriers also settled, pledging more millions for "sensitivity training"—money much better spent on security training than on indoctrinating pilots to distrust their own security judgments.

A former security officer for United Airlines describes the chilling effect that bias investigations have on a pilot's safety decisions. Let's say the government has just raised the terror alert level. Just before takeoff, a flight attendant tells her pilot: "I'm scared of these five guys in back; they're talking intensely, but they get quiet when I pass." The pilot responds: "Tell me more." "I saw them before boarding, and they pretended not to know one another." The pilot observes them and sees the same thing. He decides to take them off that flight for a further security check. Transportation Department lawyers soon contact the flight manager about a discrimination complaint; the manager interviews the pilot and asks him to write a report. The pilot comes back to work, but week after week he hears nothing about the investigation. DoT is in no hurry. The pilot's anxiety level goes through the roof—maybe he'll be sued or fired.

The next time a security question arises, will he make the same decision? wonders the ex-United official. Not if DoT can help it. "DoT is hoping he changes his behavior and looks for the positive: 'These guys are nicely dressed; I probably intimidate them. Heck, maybe they're talking about women!'"

"A screening device for Muslim terrorists cannot by definition have the same effect on non-Muslims."

In addition to individual discrimination suits, the government has continued to sic "disparate impact" analysis on anti-terror measures. One of the most destructive innovations of the rights lobby, such analysis—which assigns bigotry to neutral policies if they affect different demographic groups differently—is suicidal in a war-fighting situation. It rules out every security procedure that might actually be useful in combating Muslim terrorists, since a screening device for Muslim terrorists cannot by definition have the same effect on non-Muslims.

Transportation Department secretary Norman Mineta bears much of the responsibility for the government's irrationality regarding airline security. He infamously maintained in an interview that a grandmother from Vero Beach, Florida, should receive the same scrutiny at the airport as a young Saudi male, and he constantly warns that domestic internment—as in World War II—may be just around the corner. And behind Mineta stands a permanent civil rights bureaucracy fixated on American racism. The same Transportation Department lawyer, for example, who complained in 1997 that the early prototype of CAPPS I might pull out "too many" people of the same ethnicity—Sam Podberesky—led the recent discrimination actions against the airlines. Without strong intervention

Our still-porous borders, especially with Mexico, pose no barrier to potential terrorists.

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from Mineta, DoT's anti-discrimination machine, like most of those in the government, would run on autopilot, even though its priorities have been proved disastrously wrong.

In the government's wake, the private civil rights bar, led by the ACLU, has brought its own airline discrimination suits. An action against Northwest Airlines is seeking government terror watch lists, Northwest's boarding procedures, and its cabin training manual. If these materials got loose, they would be gold to terrorists trying to figure out airline security procedures.

Even more dangerous to our domestic defense against Islamic terrorism than the airline absurdity is our failure to control who enters the country. Here, too, fear of offending the race and rights lobbies trumps security. The alien-smuggling trade is the "sea in which terrorists swim," explains David Cohen, Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence at the New York Police Department and a former CIA al-Qaida expert. Most of the 9/11 hijackers, as well as the other Muslim terrorists who planned or committed attacks on U.S. soil before 9/11, knew that when they broke visa and other immigration laws in order to carry out their plans, nothing would happen to them. As an al-Qaida website noted in 2002, only 5 percent of the flood of people and goods that cross the Mexican border each year are inspected. "These are figures that really call for contemplation," al-Qaida added.

As long as illegal aliens continue to defy U.S. entry laws, we will remain as vulnerable as before 9/11. Yet this spring, Asa Hutchinson, the Department of Homeland Security's undersecretary for Border and Transportation Security, shut down a successful border-patrol initiative to catch illegal aliens. A specially trained team had apprehended about 450 border trespassers in several southern California cities. The *Los Angeles Times*, La Raza, and every other advocacy group for illegal aliens protested that the arrests were racially motivated and that they were "scaring" illegal aliens. All too predictably, the White House promptly called the team off, and Hutchinson appeased the race hustlers by denouncing the initiative as "racial profiling."

This July, Hutchinson followed up with a memo to every immigration, border patrol, and customs agent in the country declaring that "preventing racial profiling is a priority mission of this department." One would have thought that guarding public safety would be the Department of Homeland Security's sole "priority mission." But Hutchinson notified the agents that they would all soon be retrained in the "prevention of racial and ethnic profiling."

President George W. Bush declared in 2001: "Racial profiling is wrong, and we will end it in America." It would help if he followed up with a parallel pronouncement: "Illegal entry is wrong, and we will end it in America"—especially since illegal entry is proven to exist, unlike police racial profiling, and it threatens national safety. But any real effort to enforce the country's immigration laws would draw down charges of racism. So although the government has introduced flashy new technologies such as biometric scanning of visa holders at ports of entry, it still fails to devote even remotely adequate resources to core immigration policing.

A glance at a tiny section of the northern border, separating Vermont and a small part of New York from Canada, makes clear how lackluster the government's response to illegal entry remains. Every week, agents in the border patrol's Swanton sector catch Middle Easterners and North Africans sneaking into Vermont. And every week, they immediately release those trespassers with a polite request to return for a deportation hearing, since the Department of Homeland Security failed to budget enough funding for sufficient detention space for lawbreakers. In May, Swanton agents released illegal aliens from Malaysia, Pakistan, Morocco, Uganda, and India without bond. In July, they gave illegals from 11 terror-sponsoring countries a free pass. Since all these aliens chose to evade the visa process, none has had a background check by a consular official that might have uncovered terrorist connections. All are now at large in the country, outside the reach of law enforcement.

The failure to interdict northern trespassers is particularly worrisome, since Canada is a

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proven springboard for terrorists. Ahmed Ressam, the Algerian caught at the Canadian border with 100 pounds of explosives destined for the Los Angeles airport in December 1999, ran an al-Qaida cell in Montreal, despite having previously been ordered deported by the Canadian government. Two of the seven most wanted al-Qaida members, announced by Attorney General John Ashcroft in May, are naturalized Canadians. One, a Tunisian who has received flight training, has videotaped a "last will" in preparation for "martyrdom"; the other, an Egyptian who allegedly trained in Afghan terror camps, may already have slipped into the U.S. And Mohammed Naeem Noor Khan, arrested in July in Pakistan with detailed computer plans for attacks on financial buildings in New York, Newark, and Washington, visited Canada in 2000 and had recently applied for a return visa.

"The failure to interdict northern trespassers is worrisome, since Canada is a proven springboard for terrorists."

In response to the detention-space crisis, the Swanton bureau chief admonished his agents in May that before they released an illegal from a terrorist-producing country into the woods, they should write up a Significant Incident Report, listing all "suspicious facts and issues." A typical report: on May 31, agents stopped an illegal Bangladeshi whose visas the State Department had revoked in 2003 and whose driver's-license records contained a notice that he was a member of a terrorist organization. After the FBI told the border agents that it was not interested in the Bangladeshi, the agents released him.

This "catch and release" policy is in force all across the country for the same reason: no detention space. On June 8, agents in the Las Cruces, New Mexico, station apprehended three illegal Pakistanis and promptly let them go. The same day, guards at the Texas Uvalde station released a Bosnian wanted on an Interpol warrant for aggravated rape. The number of people caught at the southern border from "countries of interest"—terror dens—is on the rise; this year's list includes people from Afghanistan, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and—in greatest numbers—Pakistan. If previous years are any guide, the number of illegals apprehended from "countries of interest" will far exceed 4,000 in 2004. Among them may well be terrorists like Adnan El Shukrijumah, one of the FBI's most wanted al-Qaida operatives, who was spotted just this May in an Internet café in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, but eluded capture. Shukrijumah has met with leaders of the violent El Salvadoran gang Mara Salvatrucha (see "The Illegal Alien Crime Wave," Winter 2004), for help in sneaking into the U.S., according to the *Washington Times*. Law enforcement authorities told the *Times* that al-Qaida is well aware of the border patrol's detention-space crisis and resulting "catch-and-release" policy, which it hopes to exploit to loose its agents into the country.

If the government were serious about ending illegal entry and its threat to national security, it would fund adequate detention space. Instead, it plans to add only 117 new detention beds in 2005 (while probably losing another 1,400 beds for failure to reimburse county and local jails for the space it rents from them). The administration would also enforce the law against hiring illegal aliens, rather than continuing the Clinton administration's disregard for that law. As long as the supply of jobs retains its gravitational pull, the deluge of illegal entrants will flow unabated, bringing terrorists in its wake.

But the administration seems determined to maintain the schizophrenic status quo: we try to catch trespassers at the border, but once they slip across, they're home free. That was Asa Hutchinson's message to the go-getter California border agents this spring, and it's also the

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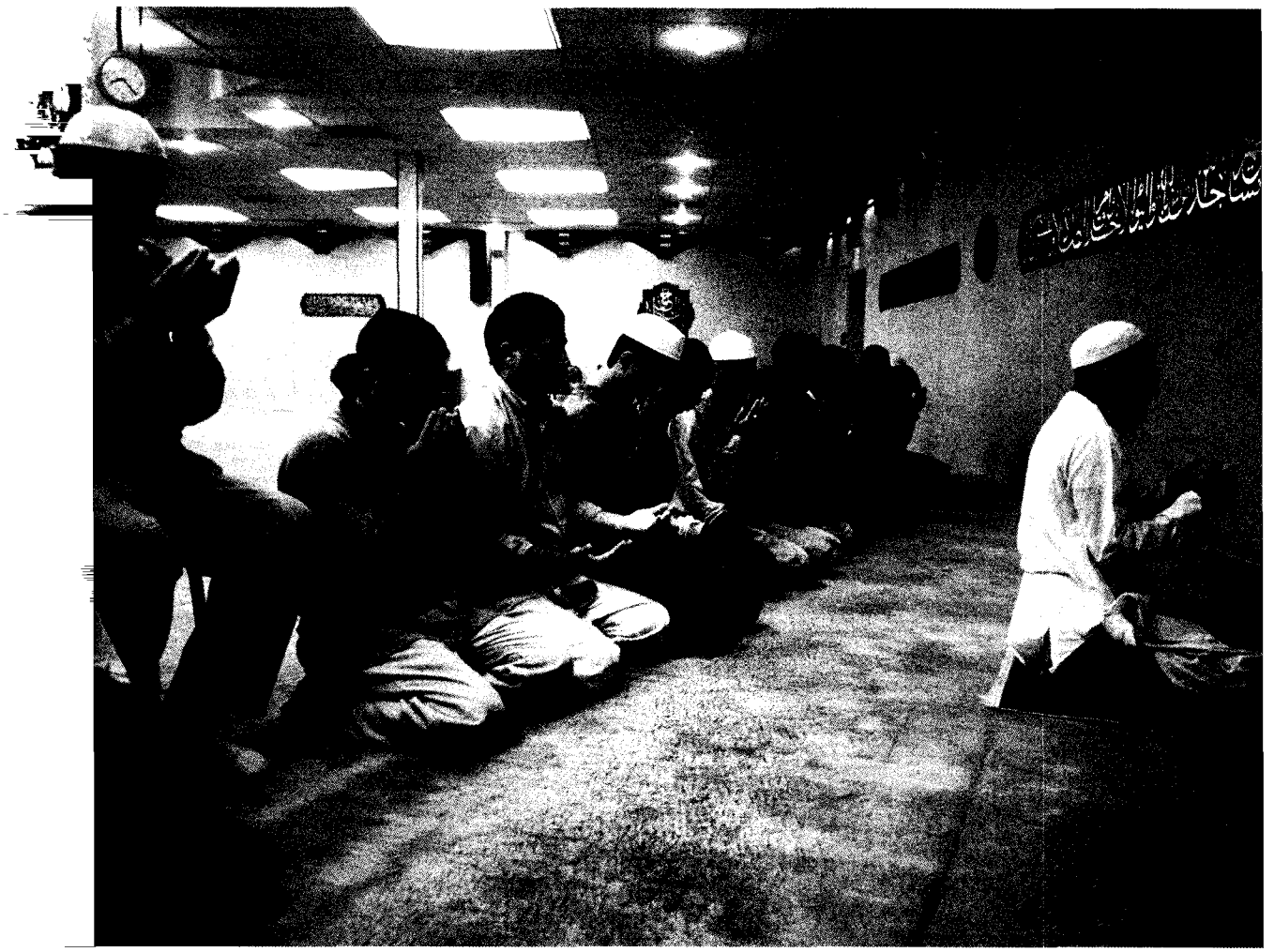

Though we are fighting a war against Islamic terrorism, our counter-terrorism efforts in U.S. mosques, like these in California, lag.

message of the executive branch's continued silence on local "sanctuary policies" that forbid police from cooperating with immigration authorities. These bans mean that the only branch of law enforcement with any hope of actually apprehending border lawbreakers—local cops—are prevented from arresting immigration felons or notifying immigration officers of their whereabouts. A bill to encourage cooperation between police and federal authorities is languishing in Congress, ignored by the White House and loudly denounced by illegal-alien advocates as an eruption of bigotry. Administration officials have also shied away from the issue of secure identification documents, even though, according to the 9/11 Commission and every counter-terrorism agent working today, the easy availability of counterfeit identity cards greases the terror machine.

Finally, putting national security ahead of political correctness would mean ending the special status granted Mexican illegals. None

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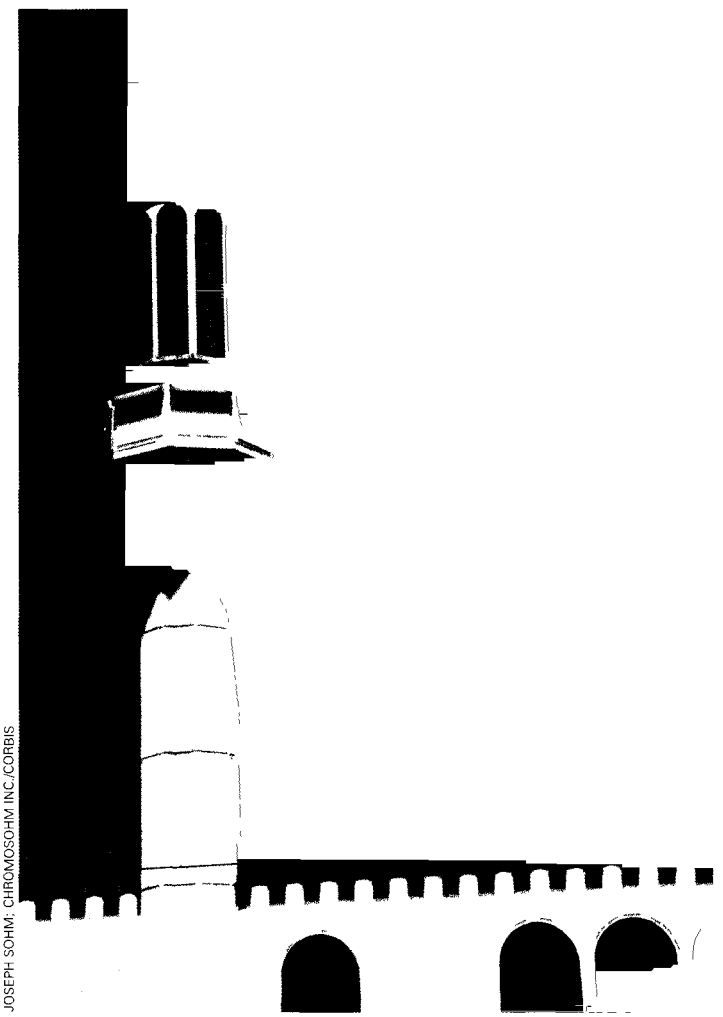
of the recent measures to strengthen border oversight—inadequate in themselves—applies to Mexicans. Mexicans are exempt from the biometric screening requirements for visa holders, for example, and an August initiative allowing border-patrol agents to expedite deportation of illegals (a vain change without an increase in detention space) exempts Mexicans. Meanwhile, the Mexican government is busily providing cover for its illegal emigrants by furnishing them with identity documents—"matricula consular" cards—intended to allow them to open U.S. bank accounts or get U.S. driver's licenses. Though the FBI has denounced the matricula consular card as a security nightmare, since its background check is so superficial and it is so easily forged, federal authorities are allowing its use to spread across the country.

These authorities seem to believe that they can give a pass to the hundreds of thousands of Mexicans who cross illegally every year—thus placating the race advocates—and still strengthen the border against terrorists. But since the government forswears consideration of national origin, race, religion, or ethnicity in its law-enforcement activities, and won't even name the enemy as Islamism, strict immigration policing across the board becomes even more crucial for catching terrorists.

Without such enforcement, Muslim terrorists will make use of the infrastructure of illegality no less successfully than Mexican grape-pickers and gangbangers. Middle Easterners have already discovered the useful corruption of Mexican law-enforcement officials. In 2003, authorities busted Mexico's consul in Lebanon for selling fake visas for up to $4,500. Her ring had smuggled about 300 Lebanese into the U.S. from Tijuana from 1999 to November 2002. In the last two years, more than 50 other Mexican immigration officers have been indicted for corruption.

President Bush should announce that henceforth, illegal entry will be treated like the crime that it is. To be against alien lawbreakers is not to be against immigrants, he should explain. Border laws protect the country for those immigrants who respect America's laws. Our inability to control who comes into the country is our biggest security threat, he should explain, and we must empower every branch of law enforcement to apprehend the lawbreakers Washington should allocate the resources to detain and deport illegals, and should start enforcing long-standing laws against employing alien lawbreakers. A deafening roar of "racism" will result, but with the country at war, pandering to the race advocates must give way to protecting American lives



JOSEPH SOHM; CHROMOSOHM INC./CORBIS

Even were the government to start enforcing immigration rules, it would still need to find

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the terror supporters already in the country. Al-Qaida members have roamed the United States for years, recruiting jihadists among citizens and non-citizens. But before 9/11, domestic counter-terrorist intelligence gathering was almost nonexistent, eroded by decades of civil-libertarian grandstanding. The threshold for investigating religious and political groups—above all, radical mosques—was very high; intelligence agents had to wait until a crime had been committed—or was just about to be—before opening an inquiry. Two years before 9/11, the head of the FBI's National Security Division was asked what the bureau was doing about terrorism. He replied: "We aren't violating anybody's civil liberties," reports Richard Gid Powers in his new history of the bureau. In other words: we're not doing much, but at least we won't be sued by the ACLU.

Has the FBI thrown off this deadly inhibition? Answering the question is difficult, since covert operations are by definition secret. A high-ranking official in the FBI's National Security Law Unit, which oversees requests to wiretap foreign agents, claims that the bureau no longer shrinks from opening investigations into Muslim extremists.

Still, other security agencies continue to shy away from any allegation of "profiling." The Department of Homeland Security recently requested that the Census Bureau pull together publicly available information on residential patterns of various "Arab ethnicities." Such information could be key in future terror investigations or outreach programs. Anyone with good computer skills could have produced the identical analysis from data on the Census Bureau's website; none of the information was private. Both the request and the Census Bureau's response were legal. Nevertheless, when the analysis became public this July, an outcry from Arab organizations, privacy advocates, and civil libertarians forced the Department of Homeland Security to erect safeguards against any similar request in the future. The Census Bureau announced that it will no longer provide law enforcement or intelligence agencies with data on ethnic groups and other "sensitive populations" without reams of red-tape review. So much for information sharing in the war on terror.

The need for intelligence gathering remains urgent, however, since according to many observers, suspicious behavior continues in mosques on the East and West Coasts—and in between. A group of newcomers will separate from the congregation and set up private conversations. "They do disruptive things, trying to pray by themselves in the middle of the ranks," according to Umar Abdul Jalil, a black imam in Harlem and the head of Muslim chaplains at New York City's sprawling Rikers Island jail. "They talk to this person and that person in secret, going into corners." Both blacks and Arabs have tried to infiltrate Jalil's Harlem mosque. What was their agenda? I asked. "I don't know," he said. "We threw them out immediately." Jalil, who is master of the double negative, does admit, however: "I would not say that individuals are not trying to make connections to radical groups, but in my experience, that would be an extreme minority."

In a more radical mosque, the leadership may sanction such breakaway behavior. Prayer groups recruit the hardcore America-haters, who meet in the evenings, according to police observers.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, radical mosques along Brooklyn's Atlantic Avenue, such as Al-Farooq, provided jihadists for the fight against the Russians in Afghanistan and served as a hub for the conspirators of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. Several officials, who would only speak on background, believe that similar activity is ongoing, particularly among Brooklyn's Pakistanis. And while some Muslim leaders and worshipers say that there's been a rethinking of anti-American rhetoric after 9/11, others maintain that it has only grown more vituperative in the wake of the Iraq war.

Yet even if the FBI is now fearless about using its surveillance authority, the strategic challenge is daunting. "The dilemma," says a big-city police counter-terrorism official, is that "you can't put a bug in every mosque. And where are you going to put it? In the imam's office? In the corner where they gather? But should it be the same cor-

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ner? And who's the 'they?'" The only solution, he says, is to develop sources and have *them* watch.

So far, however, federal and local efforts to penetrate the byzantine world of mosque politics have had limited success. After an FBI outreach to a New York mosque, the imam and his deputies reportedly broke out laughing at their successful snow job: "This is great! They're coming to *us*?" the imam chortled. The situation is the same in southern California. "We'll come back from a Kumbayah meeting with a local mosque," says a police leader, "and realize that these guys who just agreed to help us are in our terror files!" Then there's the inevitable phone call from the imam three weeks later: "'You need to check this guy out,'" and it turns out that the "suspect" has been opposing the imam in local power plays.

"Suspicious behavior continues in mosques on the East and West Coasts—and in between."

The domestic barriers to tracking down potential terrorists explain why so much of the post-9/11 intelligence in the war on Islamic terror has come from the interrogation of prisoners abroad. Yet that source is about to dry up, in the overreaction to the Abu Ghraib prisoner-abuse scandal. Military and CIA officials have shut down almost all interrogation techniques that were working, such as keeping someone awake over 12 hours a day, because of charges that they constituted "torture."

Domestic intelligence-gathering therefore will become all the more crucial in the coming year. Unfortunately, most Muslim-American organizations—above all, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)—send out a nonstop message of victimology, telling Muslims that the United States is their enemy and is stripping them of their civil rights. This summer, CAIR distributed postcards at mosques across the country with the infamous photograph from Abu Ghraib of a hooded prisoner standing on a box with wires hanging from his hands. Juxtaposed with the picture was a 2003 quotation from President Bush saying that the United States was leading the fight against torture. The postcards were supposed to be sent to Congress to demand an end to U.S. government torture. Such propaganda lessens the likelihood that Muslims will volunteer information about possible terror sympathizers in their midst.

All the more imperative, then, that no security officer, whether public or private, should fear that if he acts on reasonable suspicion regarding a possible violation of the law or threat to public safety, his government will accuse him of racism.

The skittishness of an airline executive about the possibility of behavioral profiling at American airports should be a thing of the past. Edmond Soliday, former United Airlines Vice President of Safety, lauds Israel's intense scrutiny of passengers. Soliday says he was "profiled" in Israel. "I was a single man alone, with no checked baggage, in that airport for the first time, wandering aimlessly looking for a pay phone. Security hit me." He was intensively questioned, and not just with "seven canned questions preapproved by the Department of Justice, as here." That kind of intervention found two suicide bombers in the Tel Aviv airport, who were walking on the concourse with identical gym bags but pretending not to know each other. Security sweated them and found explosives in their bags. Why don't we do what the Israelis do? I asked Soliday. "I'd be in jail in a week," he replied.

The Transportation Security Administration says it intends to test behavioral profiling in two airports. Whether it will have the fortitude to stand up against the inevitable charges of discrimination remains to be seen.

For now, officials trying to protect the public risk punishment and opprobrium, while terrorists trying to invade and destroy the country enjoy politically motivated protection. That's a formula for disaster, and it must change. ■

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The Myth of the Working Poor

Two Americas? The scaremongering bestsellers that say so are economically illiterate.

RUSSELL LEE/CORBIS

Steven Malanga

Forty years ago a young, radical journalist helped ignite the War on Poverty with his pioneering book *The Other America*. In its pages, Michael Harrington warned that the recently proclaimed age of affluence was a mirage, that beneath the surface of U.S. prosperity lay tens of millions of people stuck in hopeless poverty that only massive government intervention could help.

Today, a new generation of journalists is straining to duplicate Harrington's feat—to convince contemporary America that its economic system doesn't work for millions and that only government can lift them out of poverty. These new journalists face a tougher task than Harrington's, though, because all levels of government have spent about $10 trillion on poverty programs since his book appeared, with disappointing, even counterproductive, results. And over the last four decades, millions of poor people, immigrants and native-born alike, have risen from poverty, without recourse to the government programs that Harrington inspired.

But brushing aside the War on Poverty's failure and the success of so many in climbing America's economic ladder, this generation of authors dusts off the old argument for a new era. Books like Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* and David Shipler's *The Working Poor* tell us that the poor are doing exactly what America expects of them—finding jobs, rising early to get to work every day, chasing the American dream—but that

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A vanished America: Missouri bean pickers in 1938, . . .

our system of "carnivorous capitalism" is so heavily arrayed against them that they can't rise out of poverty or live a decent life. These new anthems of despair paint their subjects as forced off welfare by uncompassionate conservatives and trapped in low-wage jobs that lead nowhere. They claim, too, that the good life that the country's expanding middle class enjoys rests on the backs of these working poor and their inexpensive labor, so that prosperous Americans *owe* them more tax-funded help.

Though these books resolutely ignore four decades' worth of lessons about poverty, they have found a big audience. The commentariat loves them. Leftish professors have made them required course reading. And Democratic candidates have made their themes central to the 2004 elections. So it's worth looking closely at what these tomes contend, and at the economic realities that they distort.

To begin with, they follow Harrington's 1962 classic by seeing the poor as victims of forces over which they have no control. From the hills of Appalachia to the streets of Harlem, Harring-

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ton had found a generation of impoverished former sharecroppers whose jobs had been replaced by mechanization. For them, the advances that enriched everyone else spelled disaster: "progress is misery" and "hopelessness is the message." Unprepared for life off the farm, many could never find productive work, Harrington argued, and would need perpetual government aid.

But the new thinkers quickly veer to the left of Harrington, following some of his more radical acolytes whose theories produced the War on Poverty's most spectacular disasters. Harrington had seen the poor as victims because they could find no work; his more radical allies, especially a group associated with Columbia University's social-work school, argued that compelling the demoralized inner-city poor to work or take part in training that would fit them for work, instead of giving them unconditional welfare, was itself victimization. Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, for example, argued that America's poverty programs—"self-righteously oriented toward getting people off welfare" and making them independent—were violating the civil rights of the poor. Journalist Richard Elman claimed that "vindictive" America was "humiliating" welfare recipients by forcing them to seek entry-level work as taxi drivers, restaurant employees, and factory laborers, instead of giving them a guaranteed minimum income.

Sympathetic mayors and welfare officials responded to Cloward and Piven's call, boosting benefits, loosening eligibility rules, and cutting investigations of welfare cheating. Welfare rolls soared, along with welfare fraud and illegitimate births. The result was a national backlash that sparked the Reagan administration's welfare spending cuts.

But the Columbia crew left its enduring mark on welfare policy, in the principle that welfare, once a short-term program to help people get back on their feet, should be continuous and come with few restrictions and no stigma. A welfare mother, screaming at New York mayor John Lindsay (responsible for much of the city's rise in welfare cases), expressed the system's new philosophy: "It's my job to have kids, Mr. Mayor, and your job to take care of them." It was a philosophy that bred an urban underclass of non-working single mothers and fatherless children, condemned to intergenerational poverty, despite the trillions spent to help them.

Like communists who claim that communism didn't fail but instead was never really tried, Barbara Ehrenreich made her public debut with an attempt to brush aside the War on Poverty's obviously catastrophic results. The 46-year-old daughter of a Montana copper miner–turned–business executive, she joined Cloward and Piven to co-author a 1987 polemic, *The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State*. The War on Poverty had failed so far, the book claimed, not because of its flawed premises but because the government hadn't done enough to redistribute the nation's wealth. America needed an even bigger War on Poverty that would turn the country into a European-style social welfare state. Pooh-poohing the work ethic and the dignity of labor, the authors derided calls for welfare reform that would require recipients to work, because that would be mortifying to the poor. "There is nothing ennobling about being forced to please an employer to feed one's children," the authors wrote, forgetting that virtually every worker and business owner must please someone, whether boss or customer, to earn a living. Welfare's true purpose, the book declared, should be to "permit certain groups to opt out of work." (The authors never explained why all of us shouldn't demand the right to "opt out.")

The Mean Season's argument gained little traction, but as the nineties dawned, Ehrenreich found a way to bring Cloward and Piven's socialistic themes successfully into the new decade and beyond. Her 1989 book, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*, blamed poverty's continued existence in America partly on the Me Generation, which Tom Wolfe had so brilliantly made interesting to the nation. America's emerging professional middle class had started out hopefully in the 1960s, Ehrenreich claims, the inheritor of a liberating cultural revolution. But because that class depended on intellectual capital to make its living, rather than on income from property or investments, it felt a sharp economic insecurity, which by the late 1980s had

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. . . a Depression-era sharecropper family in Alabama, . . .

made it "meaner, more selfish," and (worse still) "more hostile to the aspirations of the less fortunate," especially in its impatience with welfare.

The book vibrates with Ehrenreich's rage toward middle-class Americans. The middle class, she sneers, obsessively pursues wealth and is abjectly "sycophantic toward those who have it, impatient with those who do not." To Ehrenreich, "The nervous, uphill climb of the professional class accelerates the downward spiral of society as a whole: toward cruelly widening inequalities, toward heightened estrangement along class lines, and toward the moral anesthesia that estrangement requires." Ironically, Ehrenreich's economic prescription for a better America was for government to create one gigantic bourgeoisie: "Tax the rich and enrich the poor until both groups are absorbed into some broad and truly universal middle class. The details are subject to debate." *Time* magazine, the voice of the bourgeoisie, made her a regular columnist.

If the Reagan era could provoke Ehrenreich to such anger, it's no surprise that the 1996 welfare reform heightened her fury. Passed by a Republican-controlled Congress and signed into law by Democratic president Bill Clinton, the legislation ended welfare as an automatic federal entitlement and required states to oblige able-bodied recipients to work. The law put a five-year limit on welfare (the average stay on the rolls had been 13 years) but exempted 20 percent of the cases—roughly equivalent to the portion of the welfare population believed too dysfunctional ever to get off public assistance. After President Clinton signed the bill, Ehrenreich claimed that she had seen the betrayal coming: she'd presciently cast

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. . . a New York handworker in the 1890s, . . .

a write-in vote for Ralph Nader in 1992's presidential election. She castigated the Left for its muted response to the new welfare law, though she later praised National Organization for Women president Patricia Ireland's hunger strike protesting the bill.

Ehrenreich's anger propelled her to write *Nickel and Dimed*. Beginning life as a piece of "undercover journalism" for *Harper*'s, the 2001 book purports to reveal the truth about poverty in post–welfare reform America. "In particular," Ehrenreich asks in the introduction, how were "the roughly four million women about to be booted into the labor market by welfare reform . . . going to make it on $6 or $7 an hour?"

Nickel and Dimed doesn't fuss much with public-policy agendas, messy economic theories, or basic job numbers. Instead, it gives us Ehrenreich's first-person account of three brief sojourns into the world of the lowest of low-wage work: as a waitress for a low-priced family restaurant in Florida; as a maid for a housecleaning service in Maine; and as a women's-apparel clerk at a Minneapolis Wal-Mart. In her journeys, she meets a lively and sympathetic assortment of co-workers: Haitian busboys, a Czech dishwasher, a cook with a gambling problem, and assorted single working mothers. But the focus is mostly on Ehrenreich, not her colleagues.

The point that *Nickel and Dimed* wants to prove is that in today's economy, a woman coming off welfare into a low-wage job can't earn enough to pay for basic living expenses. Rent is a burden, Ehrenreich discovers. In Florida, she lands a $500-a-month efficiency apartment; in Maine, she spends $120 a week for a shared apartment in an old motel (she turns down a less expensive room elsewhere because it's on a noisy commercial street); in Minneapolis, she pays $255 a week for a moldy hotel room. These seem like reasonable enough rents, except perhaps for Minneapolis, judging from her description of the place. But with her entry-level wages—roughly the minimum wage (when tips are included) as a waitress, about $6 an hour as a maid, and $7 an hour to start at Wal-Mart—Ehrenreich quickly finds that she'll need a second job to support

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herself. This seems to startle her, as if holding down two jobs is something new to America. "In the new version of supply and demand," she writes, "jobs are so cheap—as measured by the pay—that a worker is encouraged to take on as many as she possibly can."

What's utterly misleading about Ehrenreich's exposé, though, is how she fixes the parameters of her experiment so that she inevitably gets the outcome that she wants—"proof" that the working poor can't make it. Ehrenreich complains that America's supposedly tight labor market doesn't produce entry-level jobs at $10 an hour. For people with no skills, that's probably true in most parts of the country; but everywhere, the U.S. economy provides ample opportunity to move up quickly. Yet Ehrenreich spends only a few weeks with each of her employers, and so never gives herself the chance for promotion or to find better work (or better places to live).

In fact, few working in low-wage jobs stay in them long. And most workers don't just move on quickly—they also move on to better jobs. The Sphere Institute, a California public-policy think tank founded by Stanford University professors, charted the economic path of workers in the state from 1988 to 2000 and found extraordinary mobility across industries and up the economic ladder. Over 40 percent of the lowest income group worked in retail in 1988; by 2000, more than half of that group had switched to other industries. Their average inflation-adjusted income gain after moving on: 83 percent, to over $32,000 a year.

The workers who stayed in retail, moreover, were usually the higher earners, making about $10,000 more a year than the leavers. They had already started improving their lots back in 1988, in other words, and probably elected to stay because they rightly saw further opportunity in retailing, though the study doesn't say what happened to them. The same dynamic occurs in other industries where low-wage jobs are concentrated, the study found: those who do well stay and watch earnings go up; those who feel stuck often depart and see earnings rise, too, as they find more promising jobs. In total, over 12 years, 88 percent of those in California's lowest economic category moved up, their incomes rising as they gained experience on the job and time in the workforce, two things that the marketplace rewards.

Such results are only the latest to confirm the enormous mobility that the U.S. economy offers. As a review of academic, peer-reviewed mobility studies by two Urban Institute researchers put it: "It is clear that there is substantial mobility—both short-term and long-term—over an average life-cycle in the United States." Perhaps most astonishingly, mobility often occurs within months. The Urban Institute report points out that several mobility studies based on the University of Michigan's Panel Study of Income Dynamics, which has traced thousands of American families since 1968, show that about 20 percent of those in the lowest economic quintile rise at least one economic class within a year. If Ehrenreich had given herself 12 months in her low-wage stints, instead of a week or two, she might have worked her way into the lower middle class by the end of her experiment.

This mobility explains why poverty rates didn't soar in the 1990s, even though some 13 million people, most of them dirt-poor, immigrated here legally. In fact, the country's poverty rate actually fell slightly during the nineties—which could only happen because millions already here rose out of the lowest income category.

Confidence in the American economy's capacity to foster income mobility helped impel the 1996 welfare reform in the first place. Most former welfare recipients entering the workforce, reformers believed, would over time improve their lives—at least if other handicaps such as drug or alcohol addiction and serious mental deficiencies didn't hold them back. Everything we've subsequently learned about welfare reform shows that the reformers were right, rendering Ehrenreich's book oddly dated from the outset.

Since welfare reform passed, employment among single mothers who'd never previously worked has risen 40 percent. More important, child poverty in single-mother households fell to its lowest point *ever* just three years after welfare

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reform became law. Except for a hiccup at the end of the last recession, the poverty rate among those households has continued to drop, down now by about one-third. The *New York Times* recently reported that "lawmakers of both parties describe the 1996 law as a success that moved millions of people from welfare to work and cut the welfare rolls by 60 percent, to 4.9 million people." Those results belie the hysterical warnings of welfare advocates, Ehrenreich among them, that reform would drastically worsen poverty.

Given that such data subvert Ehrenreich's case against the U.S. economic system, she unsurprisingly puts statistics aside in *Nickel and Dimed* and instead seeks to paint the low-wage workplace as oppressive and humiliating to workers forced by reformers to enter it. But given the author's self-absorption, what the reader really gets is a self-portrait of Ehrenreich as a longtime rebel with an anti-authoritarian streak a mile wide, who can't stomach the basic boundaries that most people easily accept in the workplace.

"Few working in low-wage jobs stay in them long. And most workers move on to better jobs."

At Wal-Mart, for instance, she's "oppressed by the mandatory gentility" that the company requires of her, as if being nice to customers and co-workers were part of the tyranny of capitalism. (I suspect that most customers, if they encountered a snarling Ehrenreich as a clerk while shopping, would flee for the exit.) Told to scrub floors on her hands and knees by the maid service, she cites a "housecleaning expert" who says that this technique is ineffective. Ehrenreich then theorizes that the real reason that the service wants its employees down on their hands and knees is that "this primal posture of submission" and "anal accessibility" seem to "gratify the consumers of maid services." Never has the simple task of washing a floor been so thoroughly Freudianized.

In Ehrenreich's looking-glass world, opportunity becomes oppression. Hired by Wal-Mart shortly after applying, she weirdly protests that "there is no intermediate point [between applying and beginning orientation] . . . in which you confront the employer as a free agent, entitled to cut her own deal." Though she admits that in such a tight labor market, "I would probably have been welcome to apply at any commercial establishment I entered," she still feels "like a supplicant with her hand stretched out."

Unable to understand why her fellow workers don't share her outrage, this longtime socialist and radical feminist turns on the very people with whom she's trying to sympathize, imagining that they can only accept their terrible exploitation because they've become psychologically incapable of resisting. Why are the maids so loyal to the owner of the cleaning service? she asks. They're so emotionally "needy" that they can't break free, she speculates. Why do Wal-Mart workers accept their place in "Mr. Sam's family" instead of rising in a tide of unionization against the company? The Waltons have hoodwinked them, she surmises, misunderstanding completely the appeal to employees of Wal-Mart's opportunity culture, where two-thirds of management has come up from hourly-employee store ranks and where workers own a good chunk of company stock.

Responsibility for America's shameful economic injustice rests not only with exploitative businesses like Wal-Mart, in Ehrenreich's view, but also with the rich and—you guessed it—the middle class. Going beyond even *Fear of Falling*, *Nickel and Dimed* hangs a huge guilt trip on the middle class. Actually, guilt "doesn't go anywhere near far enough," Ehrenreich says. "[T]he appropriate emotion," she claims, "is shame—shame at our own dependency, in this case, on the underpaid labor of others." After all, Ehrenreich tells us, it's the middle class and its irritation with the poor that led to the catastrophe of

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welfare reform. "When poor single mothers had the option of remaining out of the labor force on welfare, the middle and upper middle class tended to view them with a certain impatience, if not disgust," she maintains.

Like some of Ehrenreich's earlier work, *Nickel and Dimed* is contemptuous of ordinary Americans. Cleaning the homes of middle-class families, she snoops in bookcases and finds mostly writers on the "low end of the literary spectrum"—you know, Grisham, Limbaugh, those kinds of authors. "Mostly though, books are for show," she clairvoyantly concludes. A woman whose home furnishings suggest that she is a Martha Stewart "acolyte" comes in for particularly withering scorn. "Everything about [her home] enrages me," Ehrenreich snaps. She's only slightly less condescending toward the lower middle class. She mocks Wal-Mart's customers for being obese—or at least the "native Caucasians" among them. Ehrenreich doesn't say what she thinks about the body types of middle-income blacks, Latinos, or Asians.

Ehrenreich's disparagement of the middle class, Wal-Mart, Martha Stewart, and various other targets of the Left these days doubtless has a lot to do with *Nickel and Dimed*'s remarkable success. The book rode the *New York Times* hardcover bestseller list for 18 weeks and has been on the paperback bestseller list for nearly two years now. So far, it has sold upward of a half-million copies in the U.S.

The left-leaning professoriat is helping drive the sales. *Nickel and Dimed* is standard fare in many freshman-orientation reading programs, in which schools require an entire incoming class to read one particular book. Among the 20 or so schools that have picked *Nickel and Dimed* for such programs are Ohio State (14,000 freshmen), the University of California, Riverside (nearly 20,000 freshmen), and Ball State (8,000-plus freshmen). Some of the schools, including Mansfield University in Pennsylvania (freshman class, about 1,600), have bought the book for students, just to ensure that the kids don't miss out on its wisdom. Since the book's publication, Ehrenreich enthuses, she's lectured at more than 100 universities.

Not everybody is taking this force-feeding of leftist propaganda sitting down. Conservative students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill protested the freshman-orientation reading committee's choice of *Nickel and Dimed*, bringing in local conservative groups and state legislators to try to force greater ideological balance on the school's reading program. What students objected to, explains Michael McKnight, a UNC grad who helped lead the protest, was the book's biased and misleading depiction of the American workplace, along with UNC's failure to provide any counterweight, such as critical reviews of the book. Says McKnight, "The freshman-orientation package of resources on the book included nothing but glowing reviews of it and lists of Ehrenreich's awards."

There's other evidence that students aren't buying Ehrenreich's pessimistic line on the U.S. economy. Professor Larry Schweikart, who teaches U.S. economic history at the University of Dayton, assigns his students *Nickel and Dimed* along with other books that paint a brighter picture of the American economy. Schweikart says that many students quickly grasp what's wrong with Ehrenreich's book. "Many of these kids have worked in the low-wage marketplace, so they are more familiar with it than their professors or media reviewers. They tell me that there are better jobs out there than the ones Ehrenreich stuck herself with, that those jobs aren't long-term, and that they understand that she didn't give herself any time to find better work or advance."

If the holes in Ehrenreich's argument are clear even to some college kids, the logical gaps gape even wider in the 2004 book that hopes to succeed *Nickel and Dimed* as the definitive left statement on the oppressiveness of low-wage work: *The Working Poor*, by former *New York Times* reporter David Shipler. To his credit, Shipler, unlike Ehrenreich, cares enough about the workers who are his subjects to try to give a comprehensive account of their struggles to make it, delving into their lives and addressing important economic and cultural issues head-on. Following Ehrenreich, however, Shipler

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. . . and Lower East Side sweatshop workers at the end of the nineteenth century.

wants to blame an unjust U.S. economy for the plight of the poor. Yet his own evidence proves a very different, and crucial, point: it's often dysfunctional behavior and bad choices, not a broken economy, that prevent people from escaping poverty.

Consider some of the former welfare recipients Shipler profiles in his chapter called "Work Doesn't Work." Christie, a day-care worker, describes herself as "lazy" for never finishing college (her brother, who did, is an accountant, and her sister is a loan officer). She has had several children out of wedlock with various men, and now lives with one of them—Kevin, an ex-con—in public housing. Christie can't make ends meet, but that's partly because, having never learned to cook, she blows her $138-a-month food-stamp allocation on "an abundance of high-priced, well-advertised snacks, junk food, and prepared meals."

Then there's Debra, who had her first illegitimate child at 18. Forced to work by welfare reform, Debra actually lands a job in a unionized factory—the holy grail of low-wage work to the Left. Unfortunately, she can't adjust to work in the shop, has nightmares about the assembly line, and imagines that the bosses prefer the Hispanic workers to her, since she's black. Shipler understands that with such attitudes, she is unlikely to move up.

Or how about Caroline, who spent years on welfare and has worked various jobs, including at Wal-Mart? She actually owns her own house, though, as Shipler ominously mentions, "it is mostly owned by the bank." (Welcome to the club, Caroline.) Caroline is a victim of the "ruthlessness of the market system," Shipler informs us, because she can't seem to land a promotion. We eventually learn from her caseworkers, however,

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that she doesn't bathe regularly and smells bad, that when she first divorced she refused her in-laws' offer of help, that she then married a man who beat her (she later left him), and that she keeps managing to get hired but then loses one job after another.

How has the U.S. economy let these workers down? In each of these cases, bad choices have kept someone from getting ahead.

Shipler's grim chapter headings are often wildly at odds with the stories he tells. One chapter, "Harvest of Shame," describes Hispanic seasonal farmworkers, who toil long hours for little money, often live in substandard temporary quarters, yearn for their families, and—because many are here illegally—don't qualify for government benefits. Again, though, is the U.S. economic system really exploiting these workers, as Shipler thinks? We soon learn that many of the illegals have come here to support families back in Mexico. They send home 70 percent of what they earn and plan to return south when they've amassed enough wealth (by Mexican standards).

True, since they're illegals, they can't get mainstream jobs with the potential for promotion and benefits. Yet for them, this low-wage work pays off. Pedro earns nine times more working illegally on a North Carolina farm than he did toiling in a Mexican slaughterhouse. He sends from $300 to $500 a month home to his folks. If he works just two more years on the farm, he figures, he'll have enough to build a house in Mexico, and it'll be time to go home. Like many of his countrymen, Pedro is temporarily using America to make up for the Mexican economy's deficiencies. This hardly represents a failure of our economy. Shipler nonetheless finds puzzling the "absence of anger" among these immigrants.

Pointing to illegals like Pedro, who can't take advantage of the larger opportunities that our economy offers, or to people like Debra and Christie, who, every time they start to climb the economic ladder, do something self-destructive that causes them to fall back a few rungs, Shipler claims that economic mobility is vanishing from the United States. Today, he says, low-wage workers can only better themselves if they benefit from a "perfect lineup of favorable conditions."

The Tran family is just such an exception, Shipler thinks. Everything works for these Vietnamese immigrants. Within four months of arriving in the U.S. in 1998, three family members were working, earning $42,848 in their first year in the country. Within five months, the family had earned enough to buy two used cars. Within two years, two children had registered for college. This is a "heroic" success story, in Shipler's view, because for low-wage workers in today's America, "there is no room for mistake or misfortune—not for drugs, not for alcohol, not for domestic violence."

But what the Trans have done, admirable as it is, isn't heroic—or even unusual. In 1990s California, where the Trans did so well, recall that nearly nine out of ten low-wage workers moved up, presumably avoiding the drugs, alcohol, and violence that Shipler wrongly sees as endemic to poverty. The average real income of the low-wage workers in the Sphere Institute study doubled over that time to more than $27,000 a year. Nor is there any evidence, statistically or anecdotally, that such mobility is disappearing from the U.S.

For Shipler, as for Ehrenreich, the U.S. always shortchanges the poor. Education is a prime example, he says. He tours Washington, D.C.'s public schools, where student scores are abysmal and dropout rates are inexcusably high, and—noticing the classrooms' shortages of supplies and books and the nonexistent computers—says that lack of money is to blame. But the notorious failure of D.C.'s public schools has nothing to do with money. Those schools spend some $13,500 per pupil a year—not as much as rich suburban districts, true, but far above the national average and well above what many private schools spend to educate kids effectively. As for the missing supplies and computers, blame a corrupt, dysfunctional system that wastes the more-than-adequate funds. There's no hint of this ongoing scandal in Shipler's book, even though for years the local papers have chronicled it extensively and, in desperation, Mayor Williams and the U.S. Congress have set up a voucher plan to address it.

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Shipler's obliviousness to the real causes of poverty also characterizes the latest addition to the "working poor" canon: Joanna Lipper's *Growing Up Fast*. A sometime documentary filmmaker, Lipper traveled to the once-thriving industrial town of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in order to chronicle the lives of a generation of teenage unwed mothers. Because many of these young women are daughters of blue-collar workers who lost their jobs as General Electric gradually pulled out of Pittsfield during the 1980s, Lipper blames G.E. and, more broadly, globalization for the social pathology evident in the town today—not just the teen pregnancies but also the rising crime and drug-abuse rates that she says followed G.E.'s departure. The town's youth "have been excluded from the American dream," she writes.

"Lipper sees social dysfunction and blames it on poverty. But it typically is social dysfunction that creates poverty."

Yet as the tale of Pittsfield and its teens unfolds, a different story emerges, even if Lipper—like Shipler in this regard—seems not to grasp the meaning of her own evidence. We learn, for example, that the town's drug problem actually began in the early 1980s, before G.E. left, after social-services providers opened government-funded drug-treatment centers in the area and imported hundreds of addicts from New York City and elsewhere to receive treatment. Many of these addicts, released from the programs but not fully detoxed, stayed on. They then brought friends and relatives to town and started dealing drugs around local fast-food joints and other spots where teens hung out. Not that all the buyers were kids, let alone "excluded" ones. Fueling the market, we learn, were "doctors from Williamstown and well-to-do people."

The teens get pregnant, as Lipper tells it, because they've got nothing better to do. They feel trapped, because "the major institutions of American life," the job market heading the list, "are not working for them," Lipper says. "[H]ope is the ingredient missing" from their lives. Yet one teen mother, Jessica, confides: "I had so much going for me before I got pregnant." Another, Shayla, herself born to teen parents long before job woes came to Pittsfield, says that she wanted to attend college but didn't work hard enough in high school to get in.

It never occurs to Lipper that teen pregnancy doesn't naturally flow from economic status. After all, millions of impoverished immigrants came to America from Europe in the early twentieth century without illegitimacy getting out of hand, thanks to strong religious traditions that stigmatized illegitimacy. What's really missing from the lives of Pittsfield's unwed mothers isn't hope; it's shame about teenage sex or out-of-wedlock pregnancy. The teens talk openly of early sexual escapades, and matter-of-factly pose for book photos with their illegitimate kids—unsurprising in a culture that glorifies sex and in which movie stars and rock musicians proudly flaunt their out-of-wedlock offspring. The demise of shame is a far more plausible explanation for Pittsfield's teen-pregnancy problem than is economic distress.

Like Shipler, in other words, Lipper has reversed cause and effect. She sees social dysfunction in Pittsfield and blames it on poverty. But it typically is personal failure and social dysfunction that create poverty. To stay out of poverty in America, it's necessary to do three simple things, social scientists have found: finish high school, don't have kids until you marry, and wait until you are at least 20 to marry. Do those three things, and the odds against your becoming impoverished are less than one in ten. Nearly 80 percent of everyone who fails to do those three things winds up poor.

That's a crucial truth that left-wing social thinkers have tried to deny from the earliest days of the welfare-rights movement. And as these books show, even after the conclusive failure of the War on Poverty and the resounding success of welfare reform, they are still at it. ■

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Dads in the 'Hood

Black America starts facing up to the tragedy of the Accidental Father.

Kay S. Hymowitz

Could the black family—in free fall since the 1965 Moynihan report first warned of the threat of its disintegration—finally be ready for a turnaround? There's sure a lot of soul-searching on the subject. A 2001 survey by CBS News and BET.com, a website affiliated with the Black Entertainment Television network, found that 92 percent of African-American respondents agreed that absentee fathers are a serious problem. In black public discourse, personal responsibility talk, always encompassing family responsibility, has been crowding out the old orthodoxy of reparations and racism. Bill Cosby's much debated remarks in June at the Rainbow/Push conference, calling on parents to take charge of their kids and for men to "stop beating up your women because you can't find a job," set off an amen corner. Democratic National Convention keynote speaker Barack Obama, the black Illinois senatorial candidate, celebrated family, hard work, and the inner-city citizens who "know that parents have to parent." In a *New York Times* op-ed, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates added his blessing when he asked, "Are white racists forcing black teenagers to drop out of school or have babies?" Even the wily Reverend Al recently corrected one of the *Times*'s

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Many inner-city single dads are trying hard to be fathers to their children, . . .

most fervent PC watchdogs, Deborah Solomon, that, no, Cosby wasn't being racist, and that "we didn't go through the civil rights movement only to end up as thugs and hoodlums."

A few statistics even hint that a turnaround is *already* in motion. The Census Bureau reports that between 1996 and 2002, the number of black children living in two-parent families increased for the first time since the 1960s, from 35 to 39 percent. Black teen pregnancy rates have plummeted 32 percent in the last 15 years, well surpassing the decline among white and Hispanic adolescents. Thanks to the 1996 welfare reform bill, black mothers have been joining the workforce in record numbers and making enough money to pull more of their children out of poverty than we've seen since anyone's been keeping track of these things.

And the men—the much needed husbands and fathers? You can see a glimmer of hope here, too. People are talking about fathers—a lot. The *New York Times Magazine* captured the emerging dadism in Jason DeParle's recent profile of a 32-year-old former crack dealer, pimp, and convict trying to go straight, delivering pizzas by night, taking care of his two-year-old son by day.

But the grim fact is that bringing a reliable dad into the home of the 80 percent or so of inner-city children growing up with a single mother is a task of such psychological and sociological

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complexity as to rival democracy-building in Iraq. Pundits point to the staggering rates of black male unemployment and incarceration as the major reason that black men don't get married. Others cite the poisonous relations between the sexes that too often lead to domestic violence. What is little understood is that all of these—single fatherhood, domestic abuse, unemployment, crime, and incarceration—are in effect the same problem. They are all part of a destructive pattern of drift, of a tendency for men to stumble through life rather than try to tame it, a drift whose inevitable consequence is the deadbeat dad and fatherless children.

But let's start with the good news, because it is truly worth cheering. There's a fatherhood awakening under way in the inner city. According to many observers, more and more young fathers are "taking responsibility" or "stepping up" for their children. Now that post–welfare reform mothers are getting up early for the morning shift at a downtown nursing home or hotel kitchen, the men are often out there walking their kids to school, taking them to the park or to after-school programs. "You never used to see this," says D. J. Andrews, a communications consultant who has been working with inner-city fathers for five years. "People used to say, 'That's a woman's job.'" Columbia social-work professor Ron Mincy, an expert on the inner-city family, also sees a "sea change" in hip-hop culture: it's "no longer cool" to father a child and wave from a distance occasionally. In fact, some hip-hop icons are going all Ozzie, crooning their devotion and life lessons for their sons. "You a blessin' and I'll always guide you," sings rapper Ray Benzino, co-owner of *Source Magazine* and organizer of the publication's 2002 event "to reveal the nurturing side of rap artists as fathers and mentors."

Not that this celebration of fatherhood is universal in the ghetto. Andrews says that when he explains the poverty and psychological problems that fatherless children suffer at disproportionate rates, some young men say, "I never thought about that." Others listen suspiciously and counter, "I didn't have a father, and I came out okay"—that is, until Andrews points out that that's a prison record in their file, not an honor-roll certificate.

But indifference of this sort is going out of style, as ghetto dwellers have begun to take stock—in their high schools, housing projects, and streets—of the disastrous results of the previous decades of father absence. For the hip-hop generation that grew up at the height of the crack epidemic, when so many of their elders vanished into underclass hell, rage at deadbeat dads has become a kind of primal scream. In 2001, BET.com encouraged visitors to post Father's Day greetings. Organizers assumed that they would see a Hallmark fest of "I love you" or "I miss you." Instead they got a "venting session": "I hate you," "To all my deadbeat dads out there, I just want to say, thanks for nothing," and "That bastard forgot that I even existed," contributors railed.

Father loss is a recurrent theme in contemporary black music, chronicled by some of the baddest brothers: "What's buried under there?/Was a kid torn apart once his pop disappeared?/I went to school, got good grades, could behave when I wanted/But I had demons deep inside," raps Jay-Z, who was raised in Brooklyn's notorious Marcy Projects and usually sings of "hos and bitches." "Now all the teachers couldn't reach me/And my mom couldn't beat me/Hard enough to match the pain of my pops not seeing me." Not everyone reacts to father loss with thuggish rage, of course—as witness Luther Vandross's sentimental Grammy Award–winning "Dance with My Father": "Then up the stairs he would carry me/And I knew for sure I was loved. . . . How I'd love, love, love/To dance with my father again."

Fatherhood is also getting a boost from a social-services industry that had long been in dad-denial. For close to half a century, the welfare establishment viewed fatherlessness as poverty's unavoidable collateral damage. Federal and local governments spent billions on Mom's parenting and work skills, day care and Head Start, food stamps, after-school programs, and health care; but they didn't have much to say about—or to—Dad. Starting in the mid-1990s, reams of research began to convince even the most skeptical

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activists and policymakers of the importance of fathers and the two-parent family to children's life chances, and attention turned toward the missing dad. Today, programs that try to impress young single fathers with their importance in their kids' lives are spreading across the social-services world, with support from the federal and state governments. "There's a lot of buzz about this right now," D. J. Andrews says.

Can the buzz evolve into something more than talk? The answer may strike skeptics as too pat: *not* unless these fathers can become husbands. But take a close look at the tenuous, improvisational, and usually polygamous relationships that replace marriage in the inner city. They're a breeding ground for confusion, resentment, jealousy, and rage of the sort that swamps the best paternal intentions.

"For the hip-hop generation, rage at deadbeat dads has become a kind of primal scream."

For a good example of the shaky promise of the black fatherhood programs that do not include marriage, consider Tyrell, a soft-spoken, dreadlocked 24-year-old I interviewed at a child support–work program at America Works, an employment agency for hard-to-place workers. "My generation grew up without fathers," Tyrell says. "I wanted my father—but the hell with that dude." He is determined to do better for his own 19-month-old son, spending hours each day with the boy and often joining up with friends who are also doing the dad thing. "My friends, all our kids hang together. I'm Uncle Tyrell." Not that the young father is content to be a friendly companion. With a smile he mentions that, when the child is acting up, the boy's mother turns to Tyrell to say, "*Talk* to your son!"

But even though Tyrell seems to be doing much of what fathers are supposed to do—providing discipline, sharing child care, and taking at least some financial responsibility—and even though he is determined to be the father he never had, his good intentions are slender reeds in the treacherous drift of street life. As he mentions casually, he no longer lives with his son's mother; he has a new girlfriend, and their baby is due in January.

Tyrell's haphazard approach to what social scientists call "family creation" is nothing unusual. People who work closely with the men-who-would-be-fathers describe it this way: a man and woman—or perhaps a boy and girl of 15 and 16—are having a sexual relationship. They're careful at first, but soon get careless. (The rate of contraceptive use at first intercourse has gone up among teen girls from 65 percent in 1988 to 76 percent in 1995, but after that, a third of these girls use contraception erratically.) Sure enough, she's pregnant. In some cases, he disappears on her, but more likely these days he recognizes, like Tyrell, that "he's got responsibilities." He goes to the prenatal appointments with her at the neighborhood clinic; he's there in the hospital when the baby arrives healthy and bawling, family members clap him on the back, and he's thinking, "Well, I may not have expected this, but it's pretty cool." It's what Leon Henry, head of the Maryland Regional Practitioner's Network for Fathers and Families, calls "'the happy pappy syndrome': the baby comes, and it seems like everything's wonderful."

Of course, it's not. The Accidental Father is trying to build a family without a blueprint. For one thing, he has no idea what, aside from bringing over some Huggies and Similac, he is supposed to do. After all, there weren't any fathers around when he was a child. Some men say that they grew up not even being sure what to call these ghostly figures in their lives—Dad? Pops? George or Fred?—or what fathers say to their kids beyond "How ya doin'?" or "How's school?" "To me, fathers were somewhat of a

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luxury, an 'extra' parent of sorts," journalist Darrell Dawsey, who grew up in a single-parent household in inner-city Detroit, explains in his memoir *Living to Tell About It*. "My father had left when I was an infant, gone down that same road of abandonment most of my other friends' fathers had taken. His idea of parenting was to fly me every few years to wherever he was living at the time and, in the guise of offering wise counsel, harangue me about the way my mother was raising me." When Dawsey's own daughter was born, he was bewildered. "I loved my daughter, but I didn't know how or why I was supposed to be there for her. I just didn't know."

But by far the biggest obstacle for the Accidental Father—and fanning his uncertainty—is his fragile, vaguely defined relationship with his baby's mother and her family. The problems don't always appear right away. At first, many couples enjoy a surge of hope and good intentions. The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study—following a birth cohort of nearly 4,000 children of unmarried, low-income, urban parents, as well as 1,200 married couples over five years—has found that some two-thirds of inner-city single women were still romantically involved with their babies' fathers at the time of birth. When asked, a majority of these couples say they are considering marriage, and many refer to each other as "husbands" and "wives."

Still, many of these relationships will end before the child can sit up in a high chair; most will be over before he can tie his shoes. Research conducted for Head Start found that while at birth over 80 percent of mothers and fathers are romantically involved, four years later that number has declined to 20 percent. The problem is most acute among African Americans; Fragile Families researchers found that Hispanics are two and a half times more likely to marry the year following nonmarital birth than African-American parents are.

Outsiders may find these facts troubling; young men like Tyrell do not. Having grown up in the crack-era inner city, few have ever seen a long-term partnership between a man and a woman raising children together. And without such a model, they are unlikely to see it as a goal worth pursuing. I asked Tyrell what he thought about the idea of having children with one woman with whom you stayed for good. He gave me a look of gentle condescension. "In this day and age, I don't see that happening . . . . You just do the best you can." What message would he give his own child about starting a family? "I would tell my son, 'Don't have a child until you're ready to have a child.' "

Several teens interviewed by Jason DeParle in his *New York Times Magazine* story scoff at the boring sameness of marriage, even while they yearn for fathers. "I need some little me's—children," one 16-year-old told DeParle, but, he continued, "I just can't see myself being with one woman." As another teen explained, "That'd be too plain—like you have to see the same woman every day." A young man with this attitude does not spend time "looking for Ms. Right" or "working on a relationship," or any of the other rituals of middle-class courtship. Like Tyrell, first he is with one woman, then he is with another; in all likelihood, there will be more in the future. Sex happens. And so do babies.

It's not at all uncommon to meet poor men who have left behind a winding trail of exes and their unanticipated progeny. One man I spoke with has five children by two women; another, apologizing for his shoddy birth control practices by explaining that he "likes it raw," has seven children by five women; he was 15 when the first was born. When asked about his offspring, an edgy Haitian, who owes the State of New York child support of $35,000, starts counting slowly on his fingers. He stops at four, but he doesn't seem to be joking; it's as if he's never thought of the products of his many affairs as a single group that could be labeled "my children."

Sometimes the couple is philosophical about their relationship's end. "When your woman wanna go, she's gonna go," shrugs Frank, the father of a two-year-old boy born to a mother he had lived with for five years. An amiable man, whose hardware-weight bling enhances his considerable bulk, Frank says that he either sees

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his child or phones him every day, despite his loss of interest in the boy's mother. "I don't hate my baby's mama. She's got a interest in somebody. I got a interest in somebody. . . . No use you being miserable, her being miserable. The child gonna be miserable. . . . My son right now still has a smile on his face. Daddy's gonna live his life." After all, he had "no problem" with the two fathers of the two children his ex already had when he moved in with her. "You *know* this woman. You know she picked you. She ain't gonna pick no creep."

A lot of ghetto women voice similarly friendly feelings toward the fathers of their children and are sympathetic to their efforts to come through for them. Though their child-support relationships are usually informal—unless they are on welfare, in which case the courts set the father's contribution—the men come by when they can with money, new clothes, and Christmas presents.

But usually, bitterness creeps into the relationship. The mother has special cause for resentment; she is raising a child either on her own or in a relationship with only vaguely defined obligations. One day, the father arrives at the apartment and walks into what some veteran dads refer to as "mama drama"—a litany of demands and accusations, some no doubt deserved: he is late, he didn't show up last week when he said he would, he hasn't delivered the money he promised for the high chair. His girlfriend's mother, understandably mistrustful of the cause of the wailing newcomer to an already chaotic apartment, adds an unfriendly greeting of her own: this is "grandma drama." "He's 18, she's 16. He drops by to see the baby. He's got some Pampers and formula," explains Neil Tift, director of training for the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families. "Grandma doesn't respect him. No matter how much he wants to see the child, how much abuse is he going to take?" "Many black men say to me that the sisters are just too much work," says Nick Chiles, co-author with his wife, Denene Millner, of numerous books on the relationships of African-American men and women. Once men find themselves

THOMAS MCDONALD

. . . but sadly, without marriage, most won't succeed.

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getting in tangles with women they think of as girlfriends, not as wives, it's no wonder.

Not all men accept the game of musical families as inevitable. Some try to live up to a dimly remembered ideal of a husband-like partner. What are the chances they can succeed? They've stumbled into fatherhood with a woman they had not intentionally chosen to be the mother of their child; they face a future with someone with whom they share no hopes, aspirations, or trust. Ben, a handsome, serious 37-year-old dressed in a neat, blue plaid shirt, whom I also spoke with at America Works, is a poignant example of how decency and determination can be no match for the nearly insurmountable task that these men have set for themselves.

Seven years ago, Ben had what he saw as a casual affair with a Dominican woman he didn't know all that well. When she needed a place to stay, he gave her his key, and one thing led to another. "I didn't expect her to get pregnant. The relationship she and I had—we had no business having children," he says sternly. Staying with her after his son was born, he tried to transform his Accidental Family into something solid and permanent. After all, he had been taught to be responsible: "My mother told me, when you make a baby, you raise a baby." And the wound of his own fatherlessness was still raw; he says he suffered "temper disorders" and problems in school because he needed the man who was never there. He wanted to give his son a childhood he never had. "I get him toys," he tells me. "When I grew up I didn't have any toys."

Ben's good intentions were not enough. Though "I begged her not to have any more children," soon she was pregnant again, with a girl this time. They broke up, got back together, broke up again, and had yet another girl. So now Ben had fathered three children with a woman he refers to as his wife, though he never married her and no longer lives with her, and though he sees her as an obstacle to his children's future. He wants the kids to go to Boys' Club or karate; she rarely takes them anywhere. He wants them to succeed in school; she shows little interest even in learning to speak English or helping the kids get ahead. I ask him again, why did he keep having children with a woman he didn't care for, much less love, and whom he viewed as a poor mother? "There's nothing wrong with wanting to be a father," he answers. "Anyone raised decently would want a kid. I know about being a man."

This theme—what it means to be a man—recurs insistently in the musings of poor black men. It has a long history, of course, stretching back to slavery and Jim Crow, when whites called black men "boy." And in the post-segregation era, the indifference of the social-services establishment, policymakers, academics, and the media toward black men as fathers and husbands further undermined their sense of masculinity. Worse, enabled by welfare, women let the men know that they could manage without them; a poor black man's own children saw him as the "extra" parent, as Darrell Dawsey put it. With no role as a man of the family, he became a baffling, often threatening figure, especially to himself. In the past 15 years, books with titles like *Speak My Name: Black Men on Masculinity; Are We Not Men?*; and *A Question of Manhood* have poured off the presses. Even boys are grappling with the subject: 15-year-old Brian Johnson told Dawsey, "That's manhood. Unless you can support your family and respect a Black woman, you are not a man."

But supporting a family that you never chose and that you are not really part of is less a path to manhood than to still more confusion and bitterness. Men often complain that they feel used by their children's mothers, valued only for their not-so-deep pockets. "She doesn't see me as a man; she sees me as an ATM," Ben complains. And not living with the children, fathers have no idea whether the mother's demands make sense. She says the kids need new jackets: should he believe her? She's lied before. One man I spoke with has a child who was conceived two weeks after he met the mother four years ago. "This accident happened," he explained, and ever since she got pregnant, she's been demanding money. "With her, it's 'F you.'

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It's to the point that, every time we talk, it's 'I don't want to talk. Do you got some money? That's all I want.'"

In the improvised ghetto family, the mistrust goes both ways. Patricia, a young black woman who projects an odd mixture of warmth and street toughness, lives with her two-year-old son and his father, a man she alternately refers to as her fiancé and husband, who has also fathered an older daughter he no longer sees. To protect herself and her child, Patricia hides any money she earns. "You gotta play broke," she explains. "I work for me and my son, not for my husband." Despite their seeming intimacy—she says they are talking about marriage—the couple is nothing like a parental unit. "I get scraps," she says of the money her "husband" gives her. "He sees it as 'he's helping me.' " I ask whether they would ever think of pooling their money, and she guffaws. "He thinks that's 'the white way' "—that, if a man gives a woman the check, "he's an idiot." In fact, any time there's a problem and she wants to talk things over, he says, "You think you're white. Just leave it alone." She concludes about her possible husband, father of her little boy, "I think the fool is just like that. He's never going to change."

"Men often complain that they feel used by their children's mothers, valued only for their not-so-deep pockets."

Adding to the mistrust and further threatening to isolate a father from his children, is the moment when the new woman, often pregnant, enters this domestic standoff. Maybe the new girlfriend is worried that he'll favor his children by his old girlfriend. As one mother of two explained, "If a man has more than one child, the first woman gets whatever she needs, and the second child gets what's left." Maybe the mother still carries a torch for her child's father and is jealous of his new woman. Or maybe she's worried that her child will "get scraps." Another America Works client, Randy, says that his three children's mother was so convinced that his new girlfriend was getting more than she was that she has turned their children against him. "Your father's no good, no motherfuckin' good!" she screams at them. Now, his nine-year-old calls him and curses him out, joining the spiteful "you're no good" chorus. Randy insists that he is providing child support. But, like many men, he complains that the money goes through the courts to the family; a father doesn't get to give it to his children with his own hands. If the mother is really determined to undermine her ex, she can (as in this case) tell their kids that he is a deadbeat.

Behind these struggles lurks the ever-present suspicion that men are lying, cheating, "low-down dogs." "Men weren't to be trusted," writes journalist Michael Datcher, author of *Raising Fences: A Black Man's Love Story*. "Even when our mothers didn't speak these words, their tired lives whispered the message." And hip-hoppers like "I-don't-love-'em;-I-fuck-'em" Jay-Z gleefully celebrate men's treachery. According to a number of observers, wariness about cheating men is the biggest reason that inner-city women don't want to marry. And no wonder. *The Sexual Organization of the City*, a recent University of Chicago study of sexual relations in various Chicago neighborhoods, finds "transactional" sexual relationships, infidelity, and domestic violence on the rise throughout the city, but things are worst in Southtown, the pseudonymous African-American neighborhood. Sixty percent of Southtown men interviewed had "concurrent partners"—as did 45 percent of women. The sociologist-authors conclude that polygamy is Southtown's "dominant structure."

Worse, the study's authors argue, infidelity often leads to violence. Close to 60 percent of Southtown respondents reported that at least one partner in their relationships engaged in physical violence in the previous year. The black writer bell hooks says that she often hears

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teenagers say, "There is no such thing as love." In a relationship dystopia like Southtown, they may be right.

This social and emotional reality casts real doubt on the prevailing theory about why so few black children are born to married parents. According to this thesis, there just aren't enough stably employed men in the ghetto for women to marry. First suggested by Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson, the theory had it that when "work disappears" from the inner city—Wilson was referring specifically to the decline of manufacturing jobs—men do not marry, since they can't support families. According to Wilson, employed, single black fathers aged 18 to 21 in Chicago's inner city are 18 times more likely to marry eventually than their jobless counterparts. More recently, pundits have updated Wilson's theory to take into account the many black men in prison. "Is there any mystery to the disintegration of the black family," Cynthia Tucker wrote not long ago in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "with so many young black fathers locked up?" Following Wilson, a recent paper from the Fragile Families Study supports what might be called "the marriage market theory." The researchers concluded that the reason that unwed black couples were less likely to marry than whites or Hispanics after having a baby was that there was an "undersupply" of employed African-American men.

The marriage market thesis makes sense as far as it goes: far too many poor black men seem like a risk not worth taking for marriage-minded women. As Northeastern University's Labor Market Studies found, in 2002 one of every four black men was idle all year long, a much greater number than whites and Hispanics—and this does not even include homeless or incarcerated men. There are only 46 employed African-American males per 100 females in the 20 cities that the Fragile Families Study observes, in contrast to 80 men with jobs in the Hispanic and white groups. Worse still, the Justice Department reports that close to 13 percent of black men are in jail, compared with under 2 percent of white men. Another estimate has it that 30 percent of non-institutionalized black men have criminal records. More black males get their GED in prison than graduate from high school. And the future does not look much better: 60 percent of incarcerated youth aged 18 and under are African-American.

But the marriage market thesis, by emphasizing marriage as an economic relationship, understates the centrality of cultural norms about love and the way that those norms organize young people's lives. Most American men take it for granted that not just marriage, but the pursuit of long-lasting love, is an essential life project. They spend a good deal of their adolescence and early adulthood trying to find "the one." And when they think that they have found that person, they have a predictable script in mind: they imagine and plan a life with her, one that usually involves children; they assume that both of them will be faithful; they take public vows to sanctify their shared life venture. Things far too often these days don't work out the way they're supposed to, but the very existence of an inherited script endows life with meaning and orders the otherwise disconnected existence of individual men, women, and children.

But poor black men have no script to guide their deeper emotions and aspirations. Neither searching for, nor expecting, durable companionship with the opposite sex, they settle for becoming Accidental Parents and Families. When co-authors Denene Millner and Nick Chiles speak to African-American audiences about their own marriage, Millner says that they are greeted with cries of cynicism: "You two don't count! You're Ozzie and Harriet in blackface! You're the Cosby show! It's a fantasy!"

Reduced to conflicted, tenuous relationships with women, poor black men are more likely to express sentiments like trust, loyalty, and lasting affection for their male friends. "With some friends, we've been friends ever since we were little. When he had trouble, I am there; when I am in trouble, he's there," one incarcerated 18-year-old from Omaha told Dawsey. "[I]f I had

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trouble with my girlfriend and we end up breaking up, I can always get another girl, but . . . it's harder to break away from your friends." (This sentiment may explain why so many men view their relationships with their sons as more important than those with their daughters; they are used to relying on "the brothers.") But the angry cries of the ghetto's fatherless children prove that this solution to the human need for lasting bonds solves little. As Orlando Patterson has written in his essay "Broken Bloodlines: Gender Relations and the Crisis of Marriages and Families Among African-Americans," blacks are "the most unpartnered and isolated group of people in America and quite possibly in the world."

Michael Datcher's *Raising Fences* perfectly captures the starkness of the contrast between the love and marriage that are central to the mainstream life project, and the consequences of their absence in the ghetto. As a child during the 1970s, Datcher was bused from a poor, single-mother home in Long Beach, California, to a middle-class white school. He visited a classmate's middle-class home and was floored. "It was a feeling of stability, comfort, and safety that touched me," he recalls. "I wanted that feeling in my life." He was similarly astonished when his friend introduced him to his father. "My parental introductions had always begun and ended with the mama because the mamas were the daddies too," he says. "Not in this house. They had real fathers here. . . . I literally could not speak."

Transformed, Datcher becomes "obsessed" with "picket-fence dreams." When he finishes college and goes to graduate school, his life is on track, until he has a casual affair with a woman who becomes pregnant. Datcher is distraught at having a child with a woman he does not love, just "like every other nigga." But after another ugly twist in the story—it turns out that the child is not his—he is able to resume his search and find a woman with whom he believes he can share the "stability, comfort and safety that touched" him as a boy. Love, marriage, planning for the future: they are inextricably bound.

"Indifference toward marriage grows out of the same psychological soil as the inability to earn a decent living."

Then where do jobs fit into this script? The marriage market thesis has it that men who cannot find decent work in a job market that treats them so shabbily will inevitably seem inadequate marriage partners. But this argument confuses cause and correlation. What is clear from listening to men like Tyrell is that indifference toward marriage grows out of the same psychological soil as the inability to earn a decent living. Men do not get married because they have a steady job; they get married because they are *the kind of person* who can get and keep a steady job. As Datcher's story shows, the very task of looking for "the right woman" means projecting yourself into the future and taking a mindful approach to life.

One of the most striking things about talking to poor inner-city men is their sense of drift; life is something that happens to them. I asked several men where they would like to see themselves in ten years; all of them gave me a puzzled, I-never-really-thought-about-it look. Both marriage and vocation are part of the project that is the deliberate pursuit of a meaningful and connected life. To put it a little differently, to marry and to earn a steady living are to try to master life and shape it into a coherent narrative.

Ballasting this sense of drift is a hugely difficult cultural task that will take more than a generation and needs the participation of the whole culture, from Bill Cosby and the president down to the local school and church. We've known for some time that, on average, kids are better off in every way when they grow up with their married parents. The task now is to spread the word that marriage is also best for the many, many poor, black men who long to be fathers. ■

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Why We Need a Marriage Amendment

An imperial judiciary won't leave same-sex marriage to the states.

Robert P. George & David L. Tubbs

When President George W. Bush declared his support for a federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman, his most vitriolic critics, such as Senator Edward Kennedy, accused him of playing a divisive, mean-spirited political game. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, supporters of the idea of same-sex marriage, raised a more sophisticated objection to the amendment: it betrays, they claim, the venerable principle of American federalism that respects states' relative autonomy in setting marriage policy. Interestingly, some prominent conservative opponents of same-sex "marriage," including California congressman Christopher Cox, were also skeptical about the amendment on federalism grounds. State voters could and would prevent the imposition of same-sex marriage, these critics argued. There was no need to nationalize the issue.

Despite its widespread appeal, the states' rights solution won't work. Without a federal marriage amendment, we're going to wind up with same-sex marriage in all 50 states. And here's why.

The federalism proposed by the liberal opponents of a constitutional amendment is in fact a sham. It is a contrivance for permitting liberal state judges, abetted by sympathetic justices on the Supreme Court of the United States, to foist same-sex marriage upon the whole nation.

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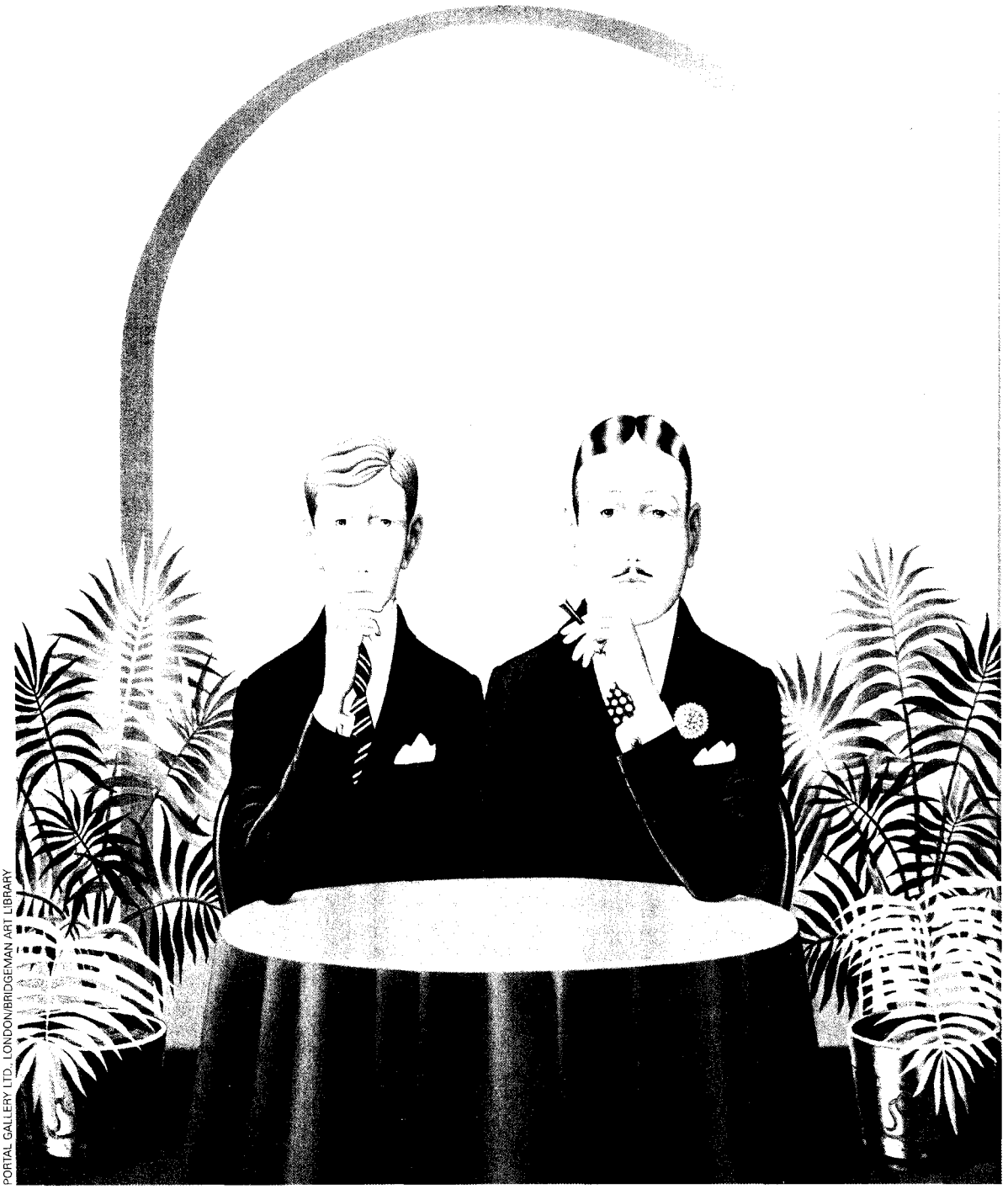

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In the traditional or classic understanding of American federalism—expressed in the *Federalist Papers* and reflected in the design of the Constitution—democratically elected state legislators represent the citizens who elect them. Those legislators enjoy wide authority to make laws relating to marriage and family life, and promoting public health, safety, and morals. Because the U.S. Constitution vests state lawmakers with such wide-ranging powers in these areas, on the classic view, courts must defer to state legislatures. Such deference is no mere courtesy or convention, but a constitutional duty. A judge may invalidate state legislation relating to marriage and family life or on public health, safety, and morals only if it conflicts with norms fairly derived from the text, logic, structure, or original understanding of the state or the federal constitution. As private citizens, judges may object to a law or policy on prudential or moral grounds, but as judges, they must distinguish the desirability—even the justice—of a policy from its

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constitutionality. Virtually all judges still pay at least lip service to this obligation.

Even so, state judges today ignore or circumvent it in practice with alarming frequency, so that the kind of federalism we increasingly have is not one of state legislatures but of state *judiciaries*. For this, the late U.S. Supreme Court justice William Brennan bears considerable blame. In an influential 1977 article in the *Harvard Law Review*, Brennan noted that state constitutions, like the U.S. Constitution, include provisions that convey important legal norms and principles in abstract-sounding language. Such provisions sometimes admit of multiple interpretations, especially when jurists ignore the relevant history and precedents. Brennan urged state appellate judges to interpret the state constitutional provisions expansively to secure individual rights, just as the Supreme Court had done under Chief Justice Earl Warren.

It was advice that many state-level judges proved eager to heed. In the years since Brennan wrote, state supreme courts—among them California's, Kentucky's, and Georgia's—have coined new rights or enlarged the scope of rights promulgated by the Warren and Burger Courts. Nowhere have the state courts run amok more wildly, however, than on same sex-marriage, an idea opposed by a sizable majority of Americans. In Hawaii, Alaska, Vermont, and now Massachusetts, judges have sought to redefine marriage, against the voters' will.

Can't states just deal with this judicial arrogance themselves, by flexing their federalist muscles? One prominent advocate of redefining marriage, Andrew Sullivan, says it's already happening (to his regret). He cites the following facts: 38 states have passed legislative bans on same-sex marriage; four states have already amended their constitutions to the same end (with an overwhelming 70 percent of Missouri voters endorsing a state constitutional ban this past August); and roughly a dozen states have scheduled referenda to consider similar amendments. It's just Republican scare tactics to say that any state that doesn't want same-sex marriage will have to accept it, claims Sullivan. Representative Cox also cites these numbers in an effort to convince the American public that the proposed amendment is unnecessary.

Regrettably, these state-level political efforts ultimately won't stop the march to redefine marriage. The reason: the Supreme Court is almost certain to nationalize the issue and make same-sex-marriage legal from coast to coast. Everybody knows about the Court's judicial activism in recent decades. That activism has reached its highest pitch in promoting the agenda of the sexual revolution. Same-sex marriage is merely the latest goal in that revolution.

As the self-appointed enforcer of elite opinion in sexual matters, the Court will have several means at its disposal to impose its views. First, if a state irrevocably establishes same-sex marriage, homosexual couples from states that don't permit such unions will flock there to obtain marriage licenses, and then sue to have them recognized by their home states. To resolve the conflict, the Supreme Court might apply Article IV, Section 1 of the Constitution, setting forth that "Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State." The Court could read that clause to override the authority of the states and to invalidate the federal Defense of Marriage Act (1996)—even though that legislation passed with huge congressional majorities (342 to 67 in the House and 84 to 15 in the Senate).

A second possible route to same-sex marriage follows the line of privacy decisions that began with *Griswold* v. *Connecticut* in 1965, striking down a Connecticut anti-contraception statute. The statute, it's worth recalling, was actually an example of federalism at work. Despite the efforts of zealous pro-contraception lobbyists, the Connecticut legislature chose not to repeal the state's legal restrictions on birth control pills and devices. Other states had laxer laws, but according to the old federalism, each state could decide for itself what was required to uphold the public interest in a decent local moral ecology. In *Griswold*, the Court said no, every state must permit contraception. The Court

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nationalized the issue and dictated a uniform policy for the states.

The Court held that the Connecticut law violated an "unenumerated" right to marital privacy. Bizarrely, this right was said to reside in "penumbras formed by emanations" from specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights. The justices knew that this type of quasi-metaphysical claim was unprecedented, and they knew, too, that critics would see it as a mere rationalization for the judicial usurpation of state legislative authority. In powerful dissents, Justices Hugo Black and Potter Stewart accused their colleagues of just such usurpation. Nevertheless, seven justices, determined to strike down a law that they believed was out of line with enlightened opinion about sex, conjured up a new constitutional formula to do so, even as they still pretended to respect traditional norms of constitutional interpretation.

"Were it not for judicial overreach, we would not be having a national debate on same-sex marriage."

Within a decade, the Supreme Court lost its remaining inhibitions about making policy, especially when it came to sexual and "life-style" matters. Notoriously, the justices transformed the right of "marital privacy" in *Griswold* into an *individual* privacy right encompassing both contraception and abortion. Even a liberal legal thinker like Jeffrey Rosen acknowledges that the Court's abortion decision in *Roe* v. *Wade* (1973) was a bridge too far, indefensibly contorting the Constitution to nationalize an issue and take it out of voters' hands. In the 1992 *Casey* decision reaffirming *Roe*, the Court went even further in its defense of "life-style" freedoms: "At the heart of liberty," wrote Justices Souter, O'Connor, and Kennedy, "is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."

Will a Supreme Court capable of such reasoning—a Court that has refused to accept state differences in laws on contraception or abortion—indefinitely tolerate a federalist approach to marriage policy? It's extremely unlikely. On the "modern" view, after all, shouldn't one's choice of whom to marry be considered a fundamental privacy right like abortion, protected from government meddling? If a man wants to wed a man, or a woman a woman, what right do other people have to deem that unacceptable? Isn't same-sex marriage a concept of "existence" or "meaning," and thus, on *Casey*'s view, a right?

Perhaps the Court will be reluctant to impose same-sex marriage at the first chance. For various reasons, including the strong public resistance to redefining marriage, it may temporize. But temporizing isn't principled self-restraint or a forthright acknowledgment of constitutional boundaries. The Court might just bide its time until more of the public becomes receptive to the idea of same-sex "marriage"—something that might occur after a few other state supreme courts mandate it.

Were it not for judicial overreach, we would not be having a national debate on same-sex marriage. That we are having one raises troubling questions about the condition of democratic self-government in America today. For defensive reasons, therefore, we need a federal marriage amendment.

But one can also make a strong positive case for an amendment. After all, the idea of same-sex marriage would have seemed outlandish only a few years ago, and today only a minority, led by an elite of academics, journalists, entertainers, and, of course, state and federal judges and their clerks, gives the idea any credence. The vast majority of Americans holds as self-evident the truth that marriage between a man and a woman is a fundamental institution of a free and democratic society. And in a free and democratic society, they have the right to enshrine that truth in their constitution.

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Can Terrorists Turn Out Gotham's Lights?

Here's how to strengthen our vulnerable power grid.

Peter Huber & Mark P. Mills

Who stayed lit after Gotham's lights went out during the blackout of August 2003? Batteries and standby generators kicked in to keep trading alive on the New York Stock Exchange and the Nasdaq. But the AmEx failed to open; true, it had backup generators for the trading-floor computers, but it depended on Consolidated Edison to cool them, so that they wouldn't melt into puddles of silicon. Banks kept their ATM-control computers running at their central offices, but most of the ATMs themselves went dead. With their robust backup generators, Verizon's wireline switching centers smoothly handled traffic volumes three times above normal, but cell phone service deteriorated fast, since soaring call volumes quickly drained the cell tower backup batteries. Traffic lights went out, but backup generators kept the city's Traffic Management Center alive enough to re-synchronize about half of them quickly when the power came back on. The dedicated fiber line that links City Hall to the city's broadcast media went dark when a Time Warner hub lost power. The radio communications system for police, fire, and other emergency services progressively lost capacity as the backup batteries for many radio repeaters ran down. Power from a satellite truck, though, allowed Katie Couric and Lester Holt to broadcast the *Today* show from Rockefeller Plaza.

The Times Square "W" hotel was open for business and humming: management had upgraded the backup system after an earlier outage reminded everyone that electricity ran not just the electronic room keys but also the water pumps that flushed the toilets. But the New Yorker Hotel in midtown went dark. To much acclaim, it had previously installed a "synchronous" cogeneration plant—which unfortunately has to shut down when grid power fails so that it doesn't electrocute linemen working on the wires outside. As it happened, the hotel was hosting a seminar for elevator mechanics that day; they helped extract guests trapped in the hotel's elevators, including a group trapped in the middle of a 20-story blind shaft, which required breaking a hole through a wall on the 15th floor.

It takes almost 11 gigawatts of electricity to keep New York City lit in the late afternoon on a hot summer day—a huge amount of power. All the air conditioners, lights, elevators, and quietly humming computers inside use a whole lot more energy than the cars and trucks out on the streets. But because the fuels and infrastructure that deliver the electric power are so distant and well hidden, it's hard to focus public attention on how vital they are to the city's survival. And how vulnerable.

Few of us have even the vaguest idea just how much a gigawatt of power might be. So let's talk Pontiacs instead: 110,000 of them, parked door to door in Central Park. At exactly the same

Our amazingly complex electrical grid . . .

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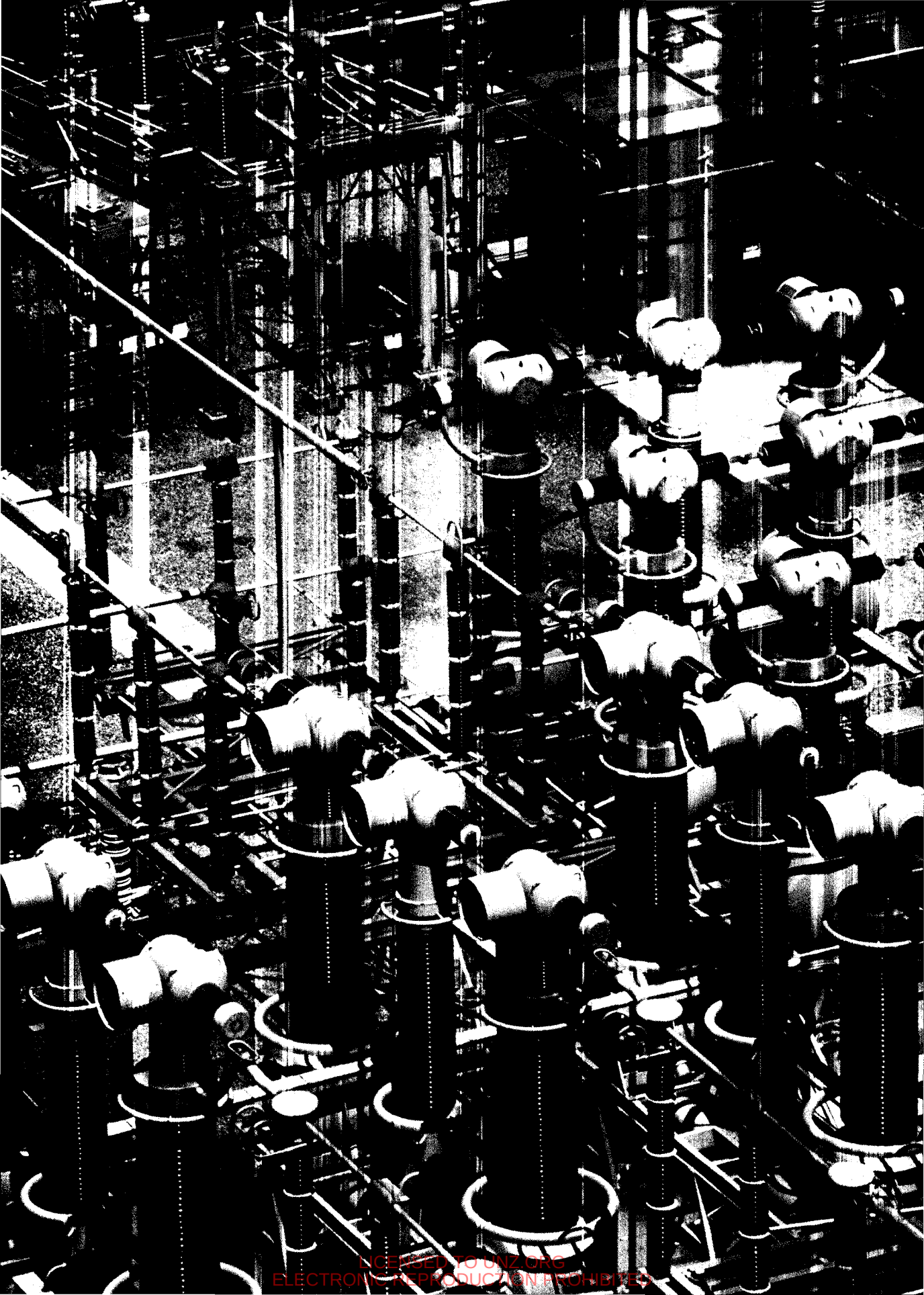

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moment, 110,000 drivers start the 110,000 engines, shift into neutral, push pedal to metal, and send 110,000 engines screaming up to the tachometer's red line. Collectively, these engines are now generating a total of about 11 gigawatts of shaft power.

Where do these 11 gigawatts come from? The Independent System Operator (ISO), a government-chartered clearinghouse responsible for the reliability of New York City's power supply, requires that 80 percent of the city's power be generated within the city, and accordingly, the city's current in-city capacity is about 8.8 gigawatts. About 3.7 gigawatts are imported via overhead transmission lines that run down from the north to Westchester, where they transmit to underground cables. These lines bring in nuclear and hydroelectric power from upstate New York, Connecticut, and Quebec. About 1 gigawatt comes over three lines from the west, through New Jersey, bearing mainly coal-fired power from the Midwest. Until they get quite close to the city, all the main lines run above ground, across hundreds of miles of open country.

It takes astonishing feats of engineering to get the power those last miles into the city. The three main cables from the west run from substations in New Jersey under the harbor and Hudson River to Con Edison substations on Staten Island and in Brooklyn. These cables could carry 1,500 megawatts, but deliveries are in fact limited to 600–1,000 megawatts. In April 2003, state regulators certified the Cross Hudson project, a quite modest (by power-industry standards) eight-mile cable that will funnel up to 550 megawatts to Manhattan from gas-fired plants in Ridgefield, New Jersey. This new circuit will follow a railroad right-of-way through the New York Susquehanna and Western Railroad Tunnel, enter the Hudson River at Edgewater, New Jersey, make landfall in New York between Piers 95 and 96 through 30-inch-diameter bore holes under the bulkhead in the Clinton Cove area of Hudson River Park, run down a bike path, cross 12th Avenue, and interconnect with an existing Con Ed substation at West 49th Street.

More and more of the city's power arrives not through an electric cable but via a gas pipeline, since regulators have been increasingly reluctant to approve anything but gas-fired plants within city limits. And just two groups of pipelines feed all of Gotham's gas-fired power plants—three pipelines that bring in gas from the Gulf Coast region, and the Iroquois Gas Transmission system that receives western Canadian gas from the Trans-Canada pipeline in Ontario.

So sever or disable just a handful of transmission and gas lines, and New York goes dark. One need not dwell on the specifics of what has to be cut or where to cut it. According to a 2002 National Academy of Sciences report (not specifically addressing New York), "a coordinated attack on a selected set of key points in the [electrical] system could result in a long-term, multistate blackout. While power might be restored in parts of the region within a matter of days or weeks, acute shortages could mandate rolling blackouts for as long as several years." Why so long? In a nutshell, because the key pieces of the giant, complex, ultra-high-power equipment that controls the flow of electricity have to be custom-built, at huge expense, for each particular location; spares can't feasibly be kept on the shelf.

For New York, any such sustained outage would, obviously, be devastating. Electricity occupies a uniquely important role in the infrastructure of all of modern society, but nowhere more so than in the heart of the metropolis. A complete loss of power shuts down telephone switches, wireless cell towers, bank computers, 911 operator centers, police communications networks, hospital emergency rooms, air traffic control, street lights, elevators, and the electrically actuated valves and pumps that move water, oil, and gas, along with the dedicated, highly specialized communications networks that control those physical networks. The loss of power also takes out virtually all of the new security systems and technologies, both private and public—not just communications and computing but everything from iris scanning to baggage x-raying, from security cameras to perimeter intrusion systems, from air-quality monitors to air scrubbers. More broadly, the loss of power shuts down any factory, office, or building that depends on computers, communications systems, pumps, motors,

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cooling systems, or any other electrically operated hardware.

With so much of what we do dependent on embedded microprocessors, almost every corner of our lives and every sector of the economy—especially the financial-services sector—depends on a steady flow of power to keep the chips lit. Much of the city's wealth exists and grows within a steady flow of the half-gigawatt (or so) of power required to keep silicon hot, screens lit, phones humming, discs spinning, lasers shining, and air conditioners running to dump the waste heat that all this digital hardware produces. The well-tempered electron is the new medium of exchange. Without power, the wealth of the modern city evaporates. The 8/14 blackout cost the city an estimated $1 billion.

"Without power, the wealth of the modern city evaporates. The 8/14 blackout cost Gotham an estimated $1 billion."

According to Mayor Bloomberg's task force to review what happened and make recommendations as to how a repetition might be avoided, the city was fortunate this time in that the outage was of limited duration and occurred during daylight at the end of the workweek; the weather was good; many New Yorkers were vacationing out of town; schools were closed. That's a chilling, rather than a reassuring, assessment: the big one, in other words, still lies ahead.

Electric New York started in 1882, at Thomas Edison's Pearl Street Station power plant. Edison had designed and built six "Jumbo Engine-Driver Dynamos," each one a 27-ton, steam-driven 100-kilowatt behemoth, four times bigger than any other electric generator previously built. The entire useful output of all these tons of steel, and the mountains of coal that they would burn, ran down thin metal wire—15 miles of it, snaking through New York City's bustling financial district to the 85 customers who had installed Edison's new electric lamps.

As Jill Jonnes recounts in *Empires of Light*, the early wires were far from perfect—an electrical fire seriously damaged the library at J. P. Morgan's elegant Madison Avenue brownstone, one of Edison's first installations. Even so, gas and oil lamps didn't stand a chance against the remarkably quick, compact, and clean new source of power. The Pearl Street wires have grown into the North American grid—by far the largest network on the planet, after our roads and highways. Nationwide, generating stations dispatch electrical power through some 680,000 miles of high-voltage, long-haul transmission lines to 100,000 substations, which in turn send it out through 2.5 million miles of local distribution wires to our toasters, computers, and industrial robots. But as we vividly saw on August 14, 2003, the grid still isn't as robust as we'd like, even when no one is deliberately trying to bring it down.

Blame the French. What offended the Gallic pride of one young Parisian in 1824 was that British engineers had managed to push their steam engines so far ahead of their French counterparts, and without even working out a grand theory of what was going on. His Gallic genius challenged, Sadi Carnot set out to determine just how much useful work could, in theory, be extracted from a kilogram of steam. His resulting slim book, less than 120 pages, set out for the first time what we now call the second law of thermodynamics, one of the universe's most fundamental laws.

Carnot grasped that temperature difference is the key—the bigger the gap in temperature between the furnace and the condenser, the more useful work you can extract. Thus, mechanical engineers push the temperature of engines up and up, burning coal, uranium, gas, or oil not just hot, but fiercely hot, as hot as they can make it without melting down or blowing up the expensive hardware. So furnaces grew bigger and bigger—bigger systems are easier to keep hot because they have less surface per unit of volume,

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and because they can be surrounded more cost-effectively by materials like concrete and steel that can both contain and survive the heat—and in the process power plants grew more efficient.

The result is that electricity has grown steadily cheaper in the 125 years since Edison first turned on the lights on Wall Street. Improved engine designs have boosted efficiency—turbines replaced piston engines, for example. And the turbines have grown colossal, which makes them not only more efficient but cheaper per unit of generating capacity. There are huge economies of scale in building and maintaining these behemoths. Our central power plants, which burn about 40 percent of the nation's fuel, run two to three times as efficiently as our cars and trucks, which burn 30 percent of our fuel (with 30 percent left to heat homes and workplaces).

Over the long term, even as fuel prices have fluctuated and fuel mixes have shifted, the average retail price of the kilowatt-hour has fallen steadily since Edison fired up his Pearl Street generators. When electricity prices have gyrated, it has been because of regulatory and political factors, not fuel supplies or technology. The long-term price trends are unambiguous.

But all this efficiency has entailed sprawl—grid sprawl. A 1-gigawatt plant—of which there are now plenty—can power the homes, workplaces, and factories of 400,000 people, but the power has to get to them, moving either above the tarmac or underneath it.

High-voltage electricity is such a dense, pure form of power that it can be dispatched over enormous distances with modest losses, much as a beam of laser light can circle the globe through a sufficiently pure strand of glass. Year by year, stretched out by the rising efficiency of swelling power plants, the wires have grown longer, the average distance between where power is generated and where it is used rising inexorably.

Though their electrical resistance does cause some losses, longer wires create a further efficiency. Local demand for electricity varies by time of day. When wires are long enough, the same power plant can accommodate peak demand at 4:00 PM in New York and then a second time an hour later in Chicago, one time zone to the west. With lots of plants knitted together in a huge grid, all can operate at closer to full capacity for more hours of the day, which keeps things hotter still.

Finally, environmental and zoning regulations make it ever harder to locate smokestacks and cooling towers near where we live. One of electricity's best features is that it readily separates the hot, dirty business of burning coal (say) from the cascade of sparkling ice out of the refrigerator door. So not-in-my-backyard regulation means longer wires to some less populated backyard far away.

By every measure but one, these trends have been good. Electricity has grown extraordinarily cheap because the sprawling grid is so very efficient. Its environmental costs—whatever they may be—are largely invisible. But with these advantages has come an extraordinary peril. A structure that sprawling, that exposed, is open to all sorts of assaults. And blackouts can be as extensive as the network that connects grids from Texas to Manitoba.

Even in the best of times, keeping order across thousands of miles of high-voltage wires requires very sophisticated control. Weather has caused four massive outages in recent memory: hurricanes in 1992 and 1996, and ice storms in 1998 and 2002. Spasms of human stupidity have worked their mischief, too. In 1991, construction workers installing drawbridge support pillars in the Chicago River put one in the wrong place; seven months later, a car-size crack opened up in the roof of a freight tunnel directly beneath it, and the ensuing flood shut down utility power for weeks in the heart of Chicago.

When a serious disturbance hits the grid, problems can cascade and amplify like trucks and cars piling up on a highway. Because they are so long and carry so much current, the wires store huge amounts of power in the electric and magnetic fields that surround them. They have enormous electrical inertia, and when things change abruptly at one end, the wires themselves act like massive malignant generators that knock voltage and current out of phase and send huge

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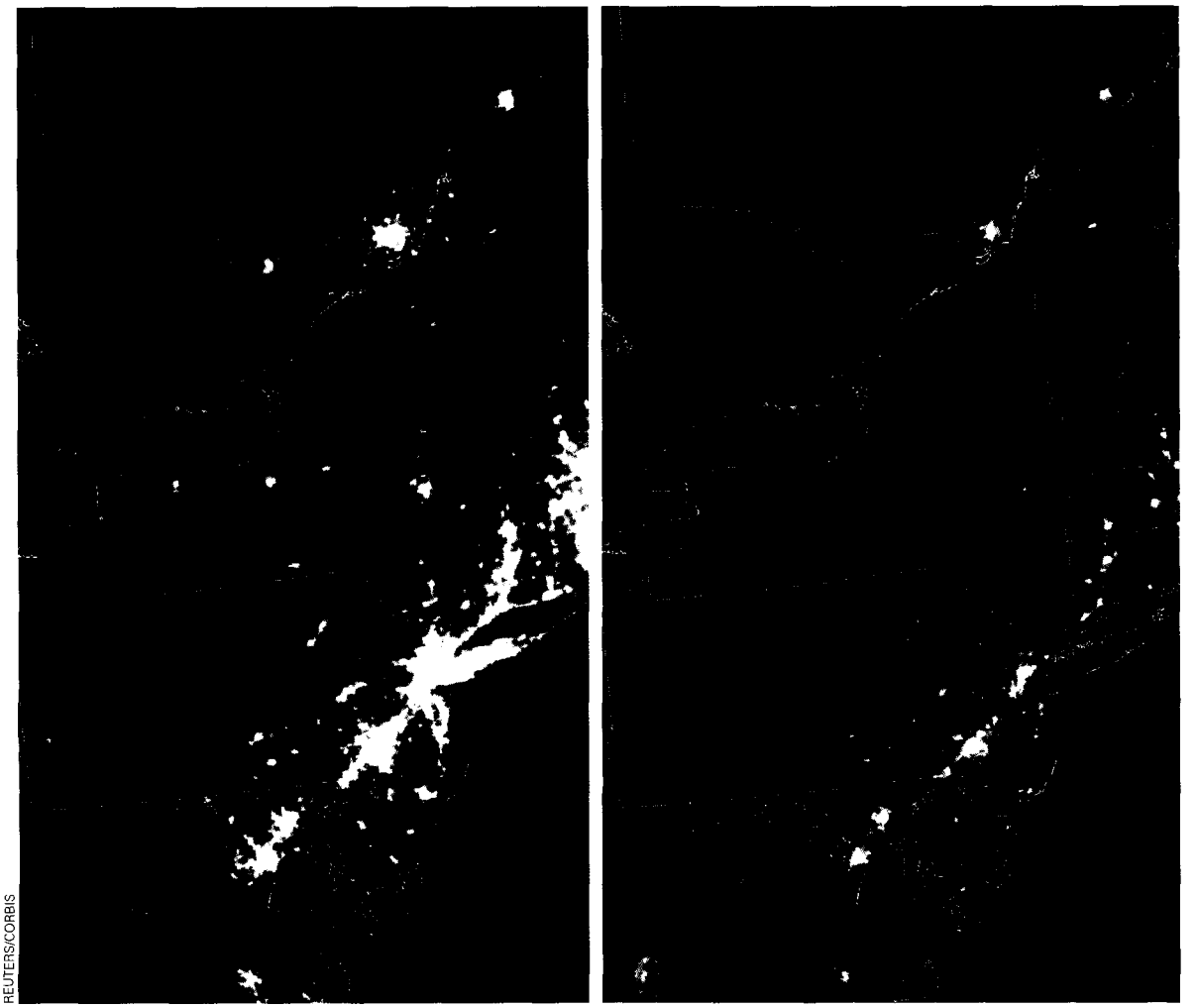

REUTERS/CORBIS

. . . is vulnerable to blackouts, like this one on August 14, 2003.

amounts of "reactive power" sloshing up and down the system, like waves in a bathtub—except that they propagate at close to the speed of light.

Thus, when a single faulty relay at an Ontario, Canada, power station caused a key transmission line to disconnect ("open") on November 9, 1965, a sequence of escalating line overloads cascaded almost instantaneously down the main trunk lines. Additional lines failed, cutting off cities and towns from the plants that supplied their power. Generating plants in the New York City area then shut down automatically to prevent overloads to their turbines. The entire northeastern United States and large parts of Canada plunged into an 18-hour blackout.

The massive blackout of the Northeast on August 14, 2003, unfolded similarly, though more slowly. The northeastern grid wasn't particularly stressed that Thursday. No great heat wave gripped the East Coast; the major transmission lines weren't running at full load; there was generating capacity to spare. The reported first cause of the 8/14 blackout was a tree interfering with a major power line. But one tree falling in the forest should not be able to black out a whole region five seconds later.

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It didn't. The tree had triggered an hour-long series of line failures and plant shutdowns in northern Ohio, near Cleveland—and the implications had gone unnoticed and unattended to, because a computer had been switched off and a technician was out to lunch. As the follow-up investigation concluded, the computer tools used to diagnose the state of the grid supervised by the Midwest Independent Transmission System Operator, a gatekeeper called into existence by the federal government's decision to foster competitive power markets, were "under development and not fully mature" when the fateful tree fell in Ohio. Thus, a grid moving gigawatts of power collapsed because it failed to move a couple of screens' worth of data, and execute a few hundred bits' worth of digital logic.

Mayor Bloomberg's post-8/14 task force succinctly and correctly called for better planning, coordination, and organization, better and more robust communications, and better backup power nearly everywhere for the communications networks and much else besides. Getting action on these solid recommendations, however, is a huge challenge, especially since much of the action requires coordination across a lot more of the grid than the city's public and private sectors control.

Grid engineers maintain and restore order, if they can, at "interties" and "substations"—switching points. It is at these nodes that the engineers attempt to isolate problems and flatten out the waves of power by routing power in and out of different lines and through huge transformers and capacitors. High-power switches thus order the grid much as microscopic gates add logic to a Pentium. These switches are controlled, in turn, by the grid's "supervisory control and data acquisition" (SCADA) networks—a sort of private Internet that moves data among the computers that control the hardware that in turn controls the power. Sensors and dedicated communications links feed information about the state of the grid to regional transmission authorities and to the utility control centers that control the switches.

Had they had real-time access to SCADA networks in Ohio, utilities across the Northeast would have seen the August 14 problem coming many minutes, if not hours, before it hit and could have activated protective switches before the giant wave swept east to overpower them. But in the deregulatory scramble of the 1990s, regulators had pushed the physical interconnection of power lines out ahead of the interconnection of SCADA networks. The software systems needed for automated monitoring and control across systems had not yet been deployed. By contrast, on-site power networks in factories and data centers nationwide are monitored far more closely and make much more sophisticated use of predictive failure algorithms.

Nor had the grid's key switches kept pace. To this day, almost all the grid's logic is provided by electromechanical switches—massive, spring-loaded devices that take fractions of seconds (an eternity by electrical standards) to actuate. But ultra-high-power silicon switches could control grid power flows much faster, more precisely, and more reliably. Already, these truck-size cabinets, containing arrays of solid-state switches that can handle up to 35 megawatts, safeguard power supplies at military bases, airport control hubs, and data and telecom centers. At levels up to 100 megawatts, enormous custom-built arrays of solid-state switches could both interconnect and isolate high-power transmission lines, but so far, they're operating at only about 50 grid-level interconnection points worldwide.

Advanced control software, interconnected data networks, and high-speed, high-power switches at key locations would instantly make the grid as smart as it is powerful. Power suppliers know where to put the software and the switches. What regulators have failed to give them, though, is any incentive to do so. The 1992 Energy Policy Act deregulated the prices that utilities could charge one another for power they shipped across state borders, but it left regulated the prices that they could charge for use of their transmission lines—ensuring that the existing lines would be used more heavily, but creating no incentive to maintain or upgrade them. The prices that grid operators may charge are set too low, with no premium for maintaining a more reliable grid or penalty for failing to do so. Unwittingly, regulators have

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systematically channeled investment capital away from the crucial wires that need it.

But even if the incentives were set exactly right, there's no escaping the vulnerability of the grid. The wonder of the modern power plant is that it can be built so large, run so efficiently, and serve so many, so cheaply; the inescapable corollary is that when it fails, the impact reverberates widely. The wonder of the grid is that it conveys so much power through such thin wires so efficiently over such great distances; those same features make it vulnerable to nature—and to terrorists.

"The wonder of the modern power plant is that it can run so efficiently, and serve so many, so cheaply."

More grid—especially more transmission capacity safely buried underground or under the sea—is certainly part of the solution. The key words in the National Academy of Sciences report mentioned earlier are "coordinated attack" and "selected set of key points." The more transmission lines that funnel power into the city, and the more terrorist-proof they are, the harder it is to sever enough of them to cause major problems. Unfortunately, regulatory obstacles make it tough to mobilize capital to get new cables up and running.

Take the 330-megawatt Cross Sound cable, for example, linking Long Island to Connecticut. By the time it was finished in 2002, Connecticut authorities had decided that they didn't like it after all—cables allow in-state power producers to sell to higher bidders out of state, so for states with power to spare, nixing long cables helps keep in-state prices low. As it happened, engineers had been unable to bury the cable to the minimum depth specified by certain construction permits, and Connecticut blocked remedial measures.

An emergency order from Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham got the line energized after the August 2003 blackout, but the order was rescinded last May at the urging of Connecticut attorney general Richard Blumenthal, who argued that the emergency had passed. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) finally pressured the parties to negotiate a settlement, and in June 2004, Connecticut agreed to approve the cable if the Long Island Power Authority would help pay to replace an antiquated cable between Northport on Long Island and Norwalk, Connecticut. It sounds like a happy ending—but a two-year delay in getting a capital-intensive facility operational can easily tip the balance from profit to loss on the entire project. When the gap between present borrowing and future revenues gets long enough, no amount of future income will ever pay back the accumulated interest.

Or consider how the federal government's own regulations contribute to the difficulty of financing private transmission lines. FERC has established a system that pushes transmission-line builders to auction off capacity to all comers in what is called an "open-season" process. To regulators, this seems evenhanded and fair, but in the real world, especially one so new and uncertain as the private electrical-transmission world, cutting pre-construction deals with a favored few anchor tenants who are willing to commit early cash is an essential fact of business life. So, for example, a private power company, Conjunction, wants to build a $400 million, 140-mile, 1-gigawatt underground line along Interstate 87 and into Queens—the nation's longest underground cable. But Conjunction's best prospect for financing is to bid successfully on a 500-megawatt contract to supply power to the New York Power Authority—which would require FERC to relax its rules to permit Conjunction to sell such a large fraction of the new cable's capacity to a single buyer at the outset.

Underwater cables are even safer than underground wires but are even more costly. The proposed Neptune project would run a 2,000-mile, 4.8-gigawatt, $3 billion undersea network down the East Coast from Atlantic, Canada, to New

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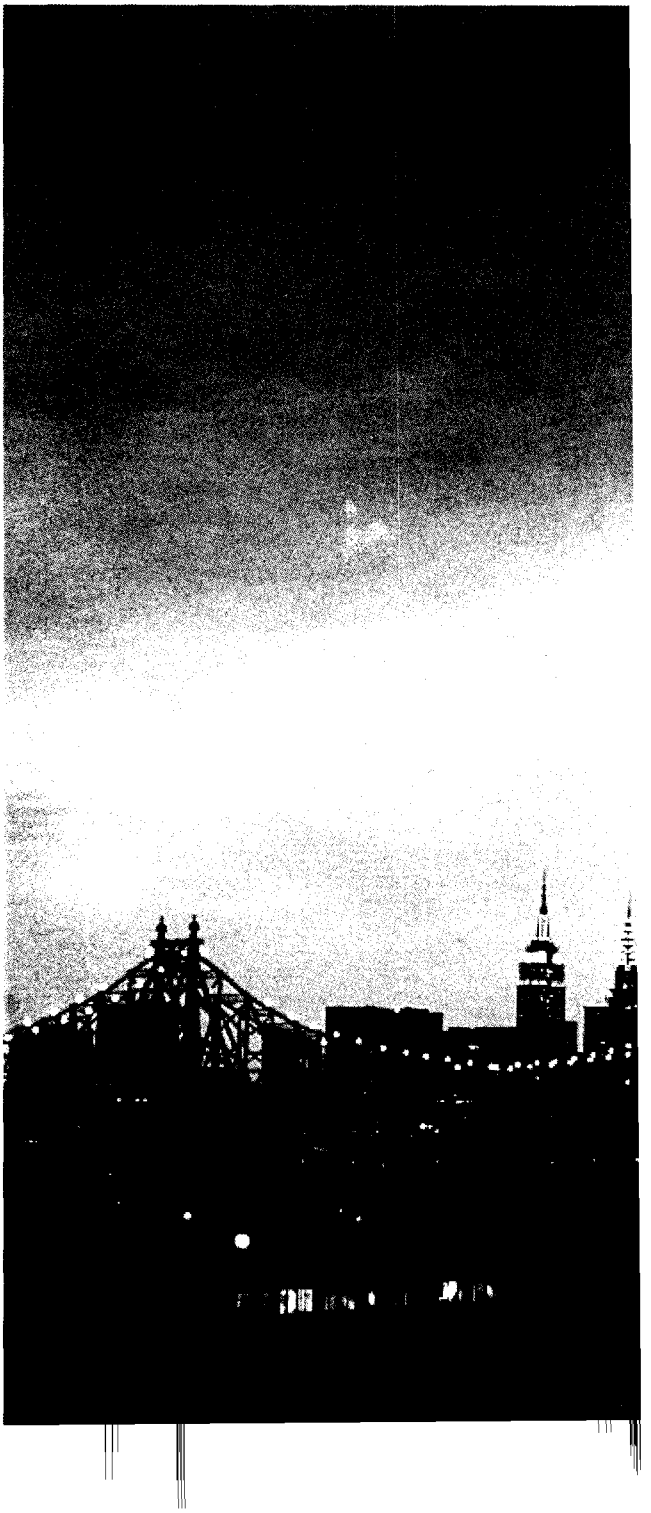
Jersey—the world's largest undersea power network. The Neptune Regional Electric Transmission System will begin with a cable connecting Sayresville, New Jersey, to Hicksville on Long Island. Lines from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Maine to Boston and New York City await funding. The wait could be long: Neptune's FERC-mandated "open-season" auction for potential long-term customers in September 2001 met with very limited response, and Neptune has put off construction plans.

The other alternative is to build more but smaller power plants, closer to where the electricity is needed. The more dispersed and redundant the system, the harder it gets to bring it all down.

Independent power vendors have been doing that, too, more by accident than by design, as they have scrambled to build gas-fired plants when demand began to outpace supply. New coal plants take at least five years to build, and nuclear facilities longer still, if they can be built at all, and regulators in states like New York and California shun both forms of fuel. So utilities and the new independent generators rushed to build gas-fired plants, which take only six months to two years and are opposed least vehemently by Green activists, who believe that gas is the cleanest and safest of affordable options.

But the new, closer-to-home gas plants provide no improvement in grid reliability. Gas-fired plants depend on gas pipelines, which are even longer than—and as vulnerable as—long wires. The pipelines depend on huge pumping stations to keep the gas moving; take out a handful of big compressors at a few key locations, and the gas will stop moving the whole length of the line for the weeks that it takes to replace hardware of this scale and complexity.

What else might be done? People who love all things green but have no notion of how much power a gigawatt really is will invariably respond with musings about solar and wind power, and fuel cells. But for now, at least, these alternatives are no more reliable than the fuels



ROGER RESSMEYER/CORBIS

More generating plants closer to New York, like this one, are part of the solution.

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themselves or the backup batteries deployed alongside them; they are also uneconomical and—because they rely on such thin fuels—require a large amount of space to generate comparatively minuscule amounts of power.

With 2,000 square feet set aside for on-site power, a diesel generator together with ancillary power conversion electronics and a buried fuel tank can provide a megawatt of power for a week. On the same footprint, a solar array with its essential backup batteries can provide only a hundreth as much power, and at roughly a hundred times the capital cost. Fuel cells, which use delicate, high-tech membranes to convert hydrogen (extracted from natural gas) directly into electricity, can do better; they are certainly more compact than solar, run very clean and quiet, and can thus be deployed directly on commercial premises. Two 200-kilowatt fuel cells, for example, on the fourth floor of the Condé Nast Building in Times Square, power a huge sign on the building's facade. But fuel cells remain a relatively unproven and expensive technology, and without large on-premises gas-storage tanks, they are no more impregnable than the gas lines that feed them. And they occupy two to four times as much space as a diesel setup.

When serious people get practical today, they turn to just two backup technologies—and only one of them supplies more than a few hours of power. Some 3 to 5 percent of the public grid's capacity is backed up by arrays of batteries (and ancillary electronics), parked under desktops or in office closets or basements, that cushion delicate equipment from electrical blips and supply power during blackouts ranging from minutes to hours. Also backing up the grid stand some 80 gigawatts of on-site diesel generators—about 10 percent of the total generating capacity that lights the grid.

This is the backup technology of choice: a diesel truck, stripped of everything but its engine. Sized from tens to thousands of kilowatts, diesel generator sets can provide days (or more) of backup run time, depending on the amount of fuel stored on site and whether supplies can be replenished. Most everyone who installs backup systems strongly favors these generators over other options because of their balance between cost, size, safety, emissions, and overall reliability.

The FAA, for example, relies on nearly 3,000 diesel generators to ensure backup power for its air traffic control centers; tens of thousands of other diesel generators back up airport towers, hospitals, military bases, data centers, and other critical power nodes. If both of the two primary grid feeds fail at AOL's campus in Prince William County, Virginia, the substation turns to power from a 13-unit string of 2-megawatt diesel generators, sitting on five days of fuel oil. Company-wide, AOL alone has 74 megawatts of backup generating capacity at its current facilities, with another 26 megawatts destined for facilities under construction. In Louisiana, in response to serious problems created by a storm-caused power outage in 2002, Jefferson Parish (as just one example of such actions) approved installation of 17 diesel generators at its drainage pump stations.

Mounted on tractor trailers, power-plants-on-wheels offer the same economies of sharing as fire engines and rescue vehicles. After floods and hurricanes cause power outages, for instance, the Army Corps' 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) installs emergency trailer-mounted generators at hospitals and other critical sites. Built by Cummins or Caterpillar, 2- to 5-megawatt trailer-mounted diesels can generate private, on-site power, but in an emergency they can be used by utilities for emergency generation at the substation level of the grid. Given the many obstacles—both cost-related and regulatory—that impede permanent deployment of backup generators, fleets of strategically positioned mobile power units offer the most practical assurance of power continuity for many critical applications.

The best thing about a diesel generator is the diesel itself. Most backup diesel generators burn distillate fuel oil, the same fuel used for heating and for aircraft. These fuels store huge amounts of energy in very small volumes, and because they power the transportation sector, a huge, distributed infrastructure of trucks and tanks already exists to transport and store sufficient fuel to keep key electrical loads lit for weeks or longer. The far-flung network of diesel storage

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tanks, wherever trucks travel and planes land, is effectively invulnerable to the kinds of catastrophes that could incapacitate major power lines or gas pipelines. If (say) 10 percent of the nation's electric loads are viewed as "critical," then one week's supply of our national fuel oil consumption would provide roughly one month of critical power. The last line of defense for the perilously efficient grid will ultimately have to be found in the parking lot outside the power plant. The parking-lot engines are less thermodynamically efficient, but they are smaller, more dispersed, and thus collectively less vulnerable.

"Private initiatives to secure private power can increase the stability and reliability of the public grid."

When all the lights fail, you have to light a candle, first, to find your way to the fuse box. It's much the same with a city and its grid. When power fails over a wide area, recovery always has to begin locally, in islands of self-help and resilience. Responsible hospitals, government agencies, phone companies, broadcasters, and other private enterprises don't count on the public grid in times of crisis—they deploy their own standby generators and switching systems from the get-go, so that when disaster hits everywhere else, they're the ones that stay up and running. And in any event, the grid is a shared resource; it would be wildly uneconomic to try to harden it everywhere just to meet the power-reliability needs at truly critical nodes scattered throughout a city.

At the same time, distributed, small-scale, and often private efforts to secure power supplies at individual nodes directly strengthen the reliability of the public grid. Large-area power outages like the one on 8/14 often result from cascading failures. Aggressive load shedding is the only way to cut off chain reactions of this kind. A broadly distributed base of secure capacity on private premises adds resilience to the public grid, simply by making a significant part of its normal load less dependent on it. Islands of especially robust and reliable power serve as centers for relieving stresses on the network and for restoring power more broadly. Thus, in the aggregate, private initiatives to secure private power can increase the stability and reliability of the public grid as well.

How, then, can we encourage such initiatives? Mayor Bloomberg's 2003 Emergency Response Task Force recommended a comprehensive survey of backup power systems and needs, and development of a plan to install more backup power. It suggested reviewing and monitoring backup power systems at telecommunications and health-care facilities. Like it or not, key private-sector segments—banks, for instance—must work closely with government to ensure power continuity at private facilities deemed critical to government functions. We can also do much more to encourage private generating facilities to supply power to the grid. With suitable tariffs and interfaces in place, backup generators can help pay for themselves by generating private power when the demand for power from the public grid is at its peak and prices are the highest. And because power-generation facilities are so capital-intensive, allowing accelerated depreciation (or immediate expensing) for tax purposes would bring more private generators online.

Removing existing obstacles to new facilities would help ensure our power supply, too. It's understandable that city folks oppose a new power plant next door and that rural citizens oppose power lines through their unspoiled countryside. Zoning and environmental regulations, fire codes, and jurisdictional and insurance-related issues often stand in the way of the on-site generating facilities of last resorts and the fuel tanks that they require. But in the new, post-9/11 world, these are problems we have to solve, right now. ■

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Reimagining the Far West Side

Renowned architects bring the classical New York skyscraper tradition into the twenty-first century.

Robert Adam, Franck Lohsen McCrery, Peter Pennoyer, Richard Sammons, John Simpson, Thomas Gordon Smith, & Alexander Stoddart

The rebuilding of the World Trade Center site has gotten everyone talking about architecture, but so far it's a one-sided conversation, as if the only question worth discussing is: What kind of modernism do we want? The graceless modernism of Daniel Libeskind's brutal and exhibitionistic "master plan"? The suave modernism of David Childs's valiant (but hopeless) effort to transform that plan's tallest building into a silk purse? But since we've now had 50 years of modernism here in New York, and only a half-dozen good buildings among hundreds of awful ones to show for it, maybe what we really want now is . . . not modernism.

Think of modernism and you think Houston, maybe, or office parks from Cherry Hill to Cupertino. But not New York. Gotham is the city of the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building, New York trademarks, emblazoning the T-shirts that tourists take home from the Times Square souvenir shops. New York is the Plaza Hotel, the Flatiron Building, the old Bankers Trust and Equitable towers, the RCA Victor Building soaring over Saint Bartholomew's Church, the Sherry-Netherland, the San Remo. If Chicago takes the palm for inventing the skyscraper, New York can claim to have brought it to full flower. The classical skyscraper is one of Gotham's gifts to the world, the urbane expression of its technical genius, wealth, and confident cosmopolitanism.

But when the dour Swiss Le Corbusier warned, "Beware the American architect"—meaning the New York skyscraper geniuses—the whole world, New York included, instantly hunched up its shoulders and took notice. Out with columns and cornices, out with decoration, even when it was as jazzy as the RCA Victor Building's dazzling bolts of electricity or the Waldorf-Astoria's sleek domes. Now we would have the grid-clad box of metal and glass, a machine for living, with form following function and no fussy and sentimental gewgaws.

You can see the initial appeal of the brave new world of no-nonsense industrial efficiency; but now, looking backward, there is a hint of something not just antihumanist but antihuman in the project, a whiff of totalitarianism. The grid bespoke faceless regimentation, the absorption of the individual into the relentless bureaucratic system, the effacement of all the quirky whimsy that makes us not just Man in the abstract but distinct selves with the unique identities that are part of what make us human. No wonder that today Le Corbusier's towers-in-the-park ideal exists in its purest form mostly as welfare-state housing projects, inhuman slabs in desolate wastelands, housing man not, shall we say, at his highest pitch of development. A machine for living: but what kind of life?

Looking north up Hudson Boulevard, with *buildings (left to right) by Robert Adam, Franck Lohsen McCrery, Thomas Gordon Smith, and Peter Pennoyer.*

Well, the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site is a lost opportunity; but New York

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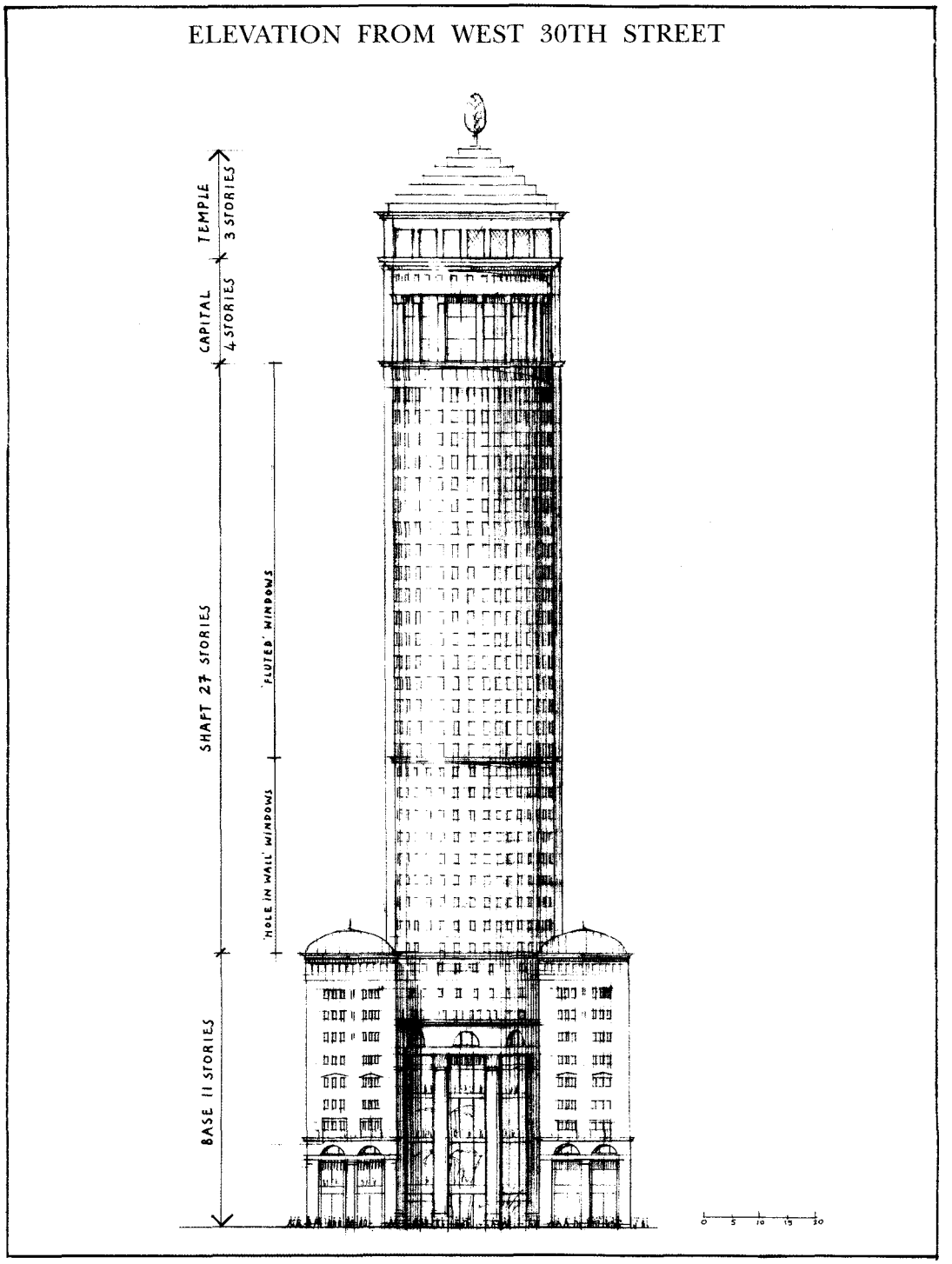

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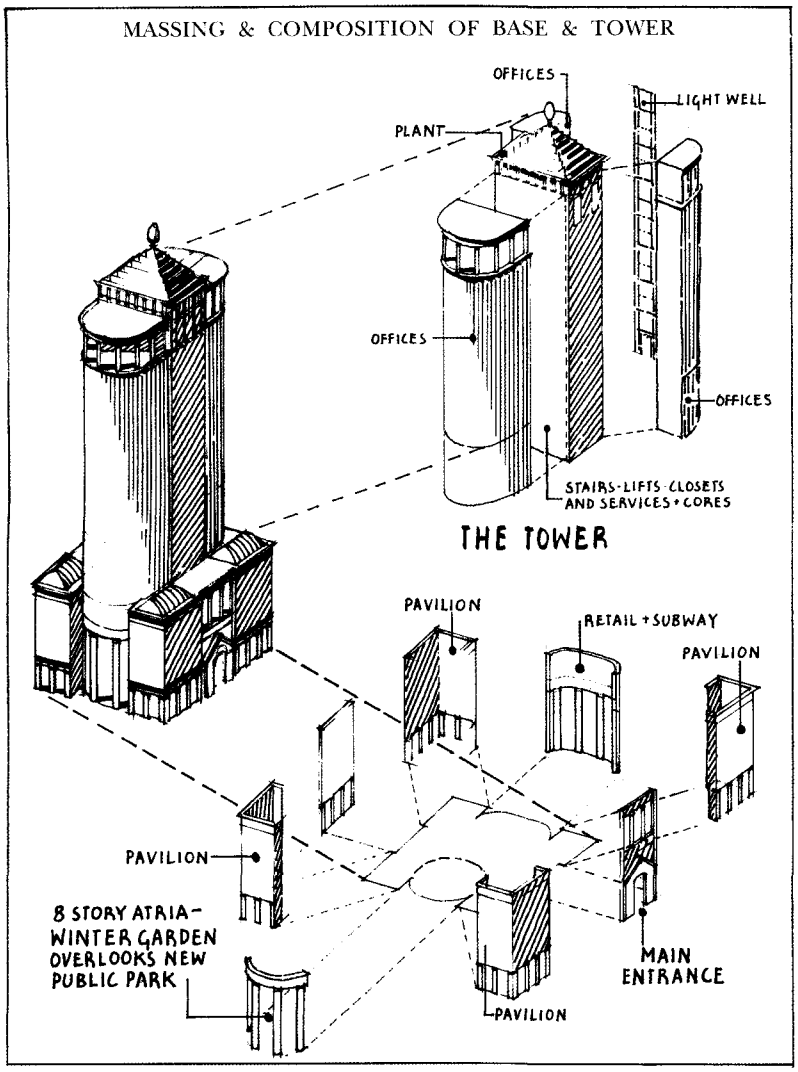
suddenly has another chance to move beyond the stale, seven-decade-old cliché of the endlessly repeated glass box, or the glass box twisted, deconstructed, or otherwise contorted as much by computer-design programs as by any human imagination. The City Planning Commission has proposed re-zoning for redevelopment a vast area of the Far West Side—more than 60 blocks from Seventh to Twelfth Avenues and from 30th to 43rd Streets. At the center of this redevelopment, an area now mostly of parking lots, rail yards, low-rise garages and repair shops, and the tangle of approaches to the Lincoln Tunnel, the planners envision a new boulevard, running between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, and zoned for massive office buildings suitable for major corporate headquarters. For this north-south street, called Hudson Boulevard, *City Journal* has asked six renowned architects to design a half-dozen truly postmodernist buildings, skyscrapers that bypass modernism's dead end and bring New York's long and vibrant tradition of classical tall buildings triumphantly into the twenty-first century.

Robert Adam's tower is a pyramid-capped column rising out of 11-story, copper-domed pavilions.



What do we hope to achieve by this project? First, we wanted to get traditionalist architects thinking about skyscrapers again. For decades, the glass box has been the *only* kind of skyscraper constructed, so much so that traditional architects haven't even bothered submitting proposals to design them. They have built magnificent low-rise buildings of every description, from sumptuous country houses, rivaling in harmony of proportion and exquisiteness of detail anything that the great Georgian architects created, to office developments that look like an entire classical urban square to new college quadrangles and churches. But of the tall buildings that define a city—and that set the direction of the entire architectural profession, because of the money, prestige, and visibility involved—they have built very few.

Second, we wanted to show real-estate developers and the corporate chiefs who rent their space that they have an alternative to the same-old, same-old that claims to be up-to-the-minute and daring and cutting-edge but has been timid and established orthodoxy for decades. Very

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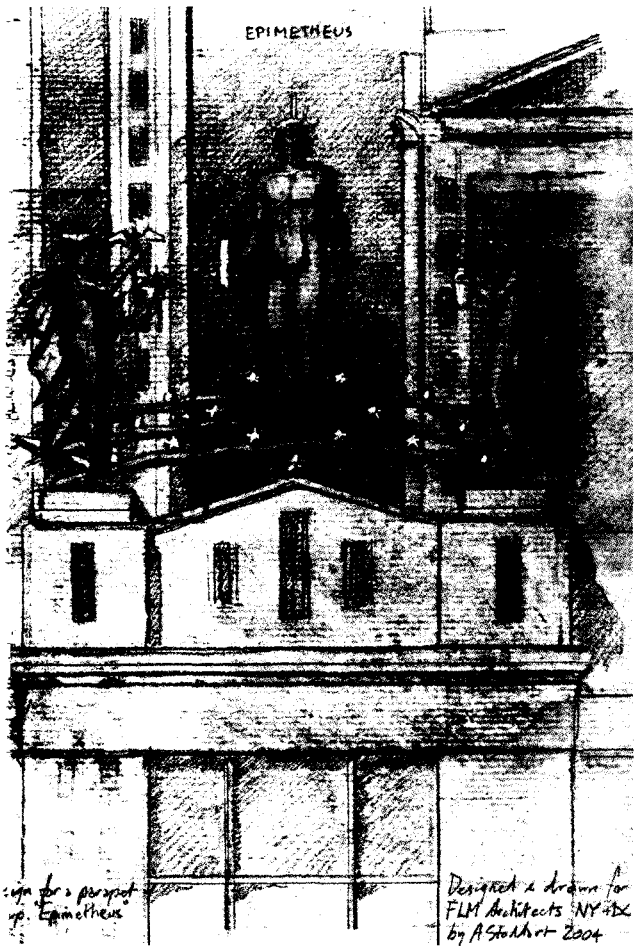

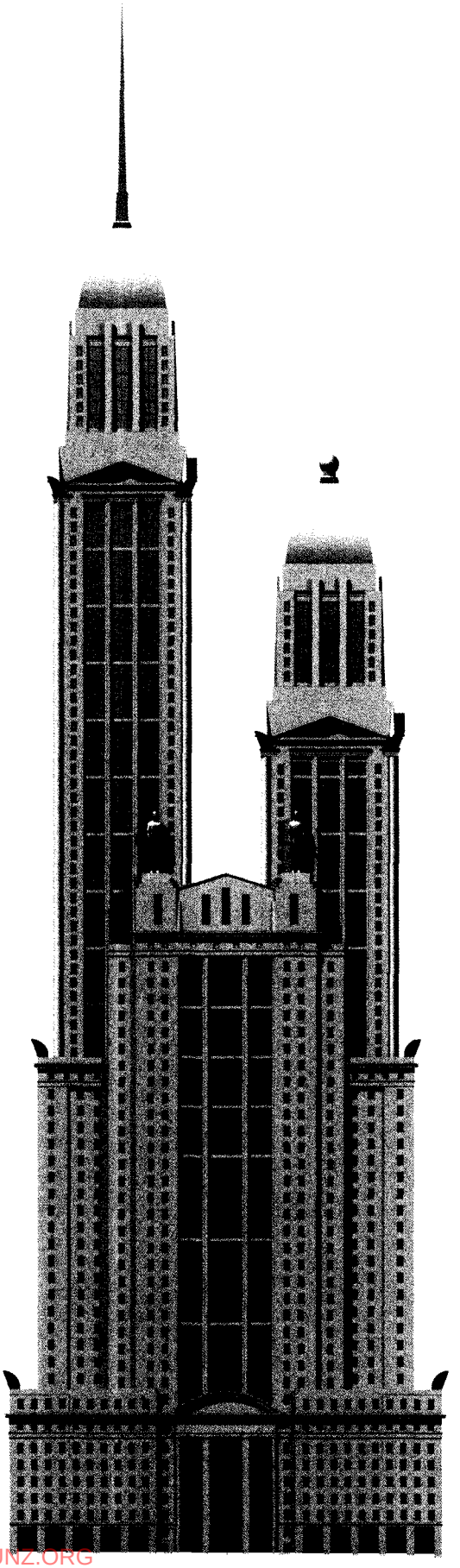

Franck Lohsen McCrery's suave twin-towered building (far left and far right) sports sculptured titans by Alexander Stoddart (above).

few of these distinguished people live in modernist houses, because like everyone else, they *don't much like the style.* They live in Tudor or Georgian mansions, or in penthouses with Adamesque doorways and classical moldings. Even when you go up to the CEO's suite at the top of a modernist tower, you often enough find, amazingly, a fire crackling in the neo-Palladian fireplace and museum-quality eighteenth-century furniture—or, in the lawyers' offices, miles of mahogany paneling and molding, and ersatz versions of the CEO's originals, as if we were in the Inns of Court. But in choosing their architects, a herd mentality takes over. Everyone suffers agonies of mortification that he'll seem a trailer-trash *rube if he says out loud the plain truth that the* modernist emperor has no clothes. So up go the glass boxes, the safe, conventional choice.

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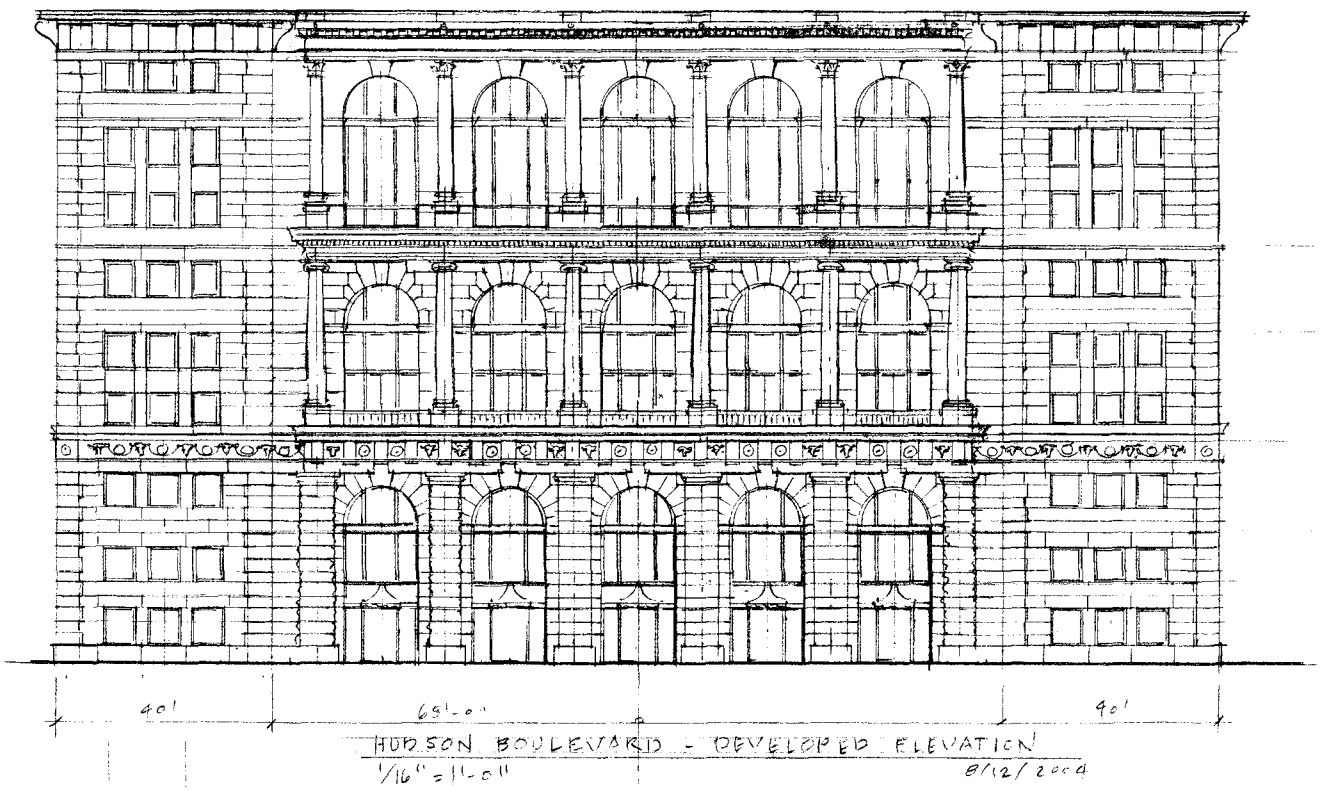
In a world where McMansions with Venetian windows and "Great Rooms" are springing up in every suburb, this knee-jerk reflex may not even be such a good business decision anymore. One of *City Journal*'s distinguished architects, John Simpson, is building New York's first new classical stone building in 60 years on East 95th Street—an extension of an existing beaux arts townhouse, to make a single structure that will then be sold off as condominium apartments. The developer had originally hired an architect to plan a modernist extension, but realized she couldn't make the project profitable. Only classical apartments would, as the developers say, "pencil out."

We asked each of our architects to pick a Hudson Boulevard site and design a major office tower that meets that site's specific zoning requirements. The result is a half-dozen extraordinary buildings, each memorably original, and all forming a harmonious ensemble, since they abide by some basic rules of urban civility. While these are very big buildings, ranging from 45 to 70 stories in height and offering the large, uninterrupted floor areas that modern corporations want, they bring a human scale to their monumentality. At ground level, they present urbanely welcoming street fronts, grand without being overpowering, with a progression of interesting shop windows. They break their facades into clearly articulated sections, developing and transforming as they rise and offering a visual interest that draws the eye skyward. And what a skyline they compose, with domes and pyramids of copper, brass, limestone, and gilding. This is a skyline that would be a daily inspiration

Thomas Gordon Smith envisions an impeccably detailed Italian palazzo, with a concave facade, as the base of his tripartite tower.



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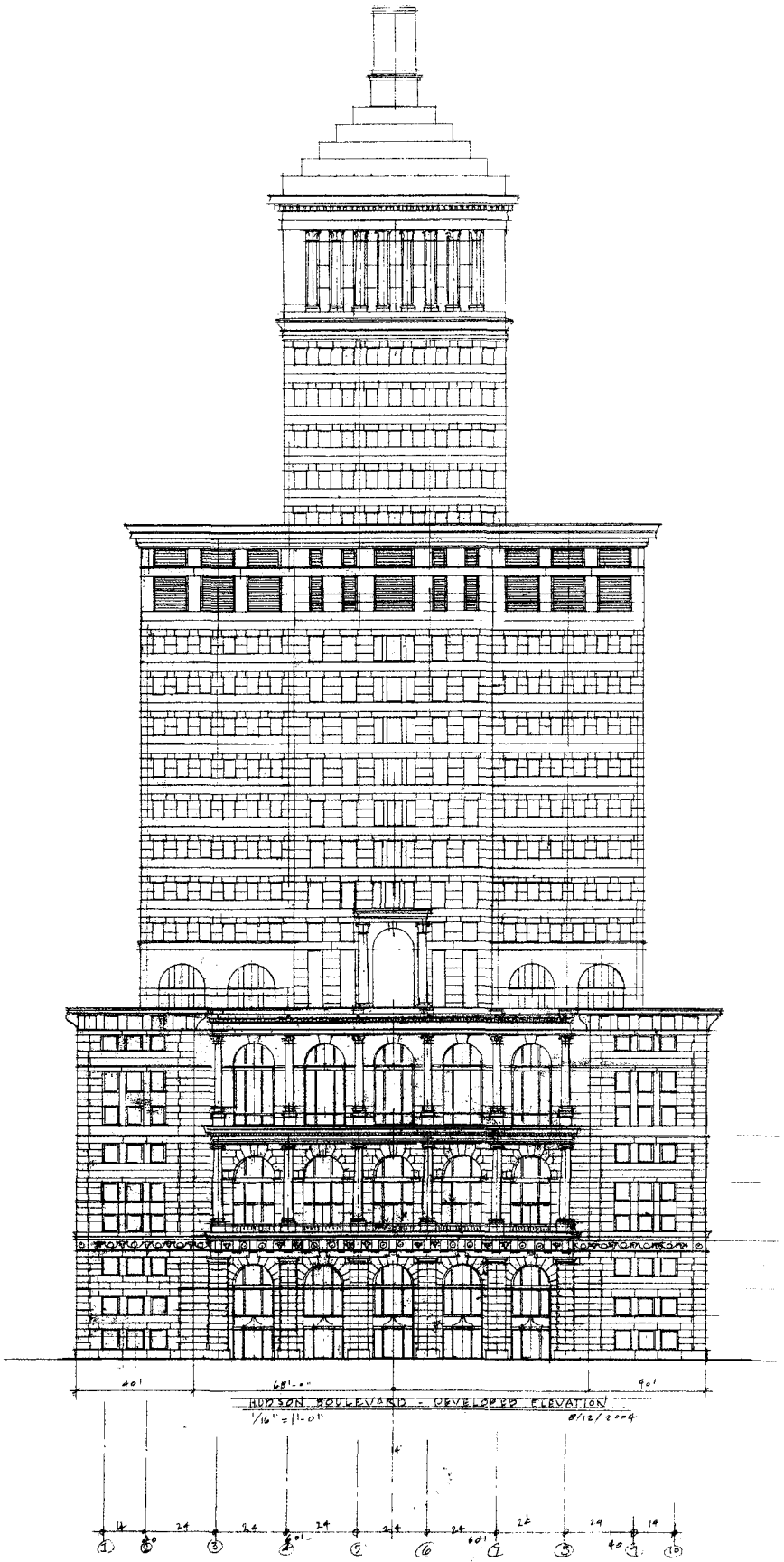

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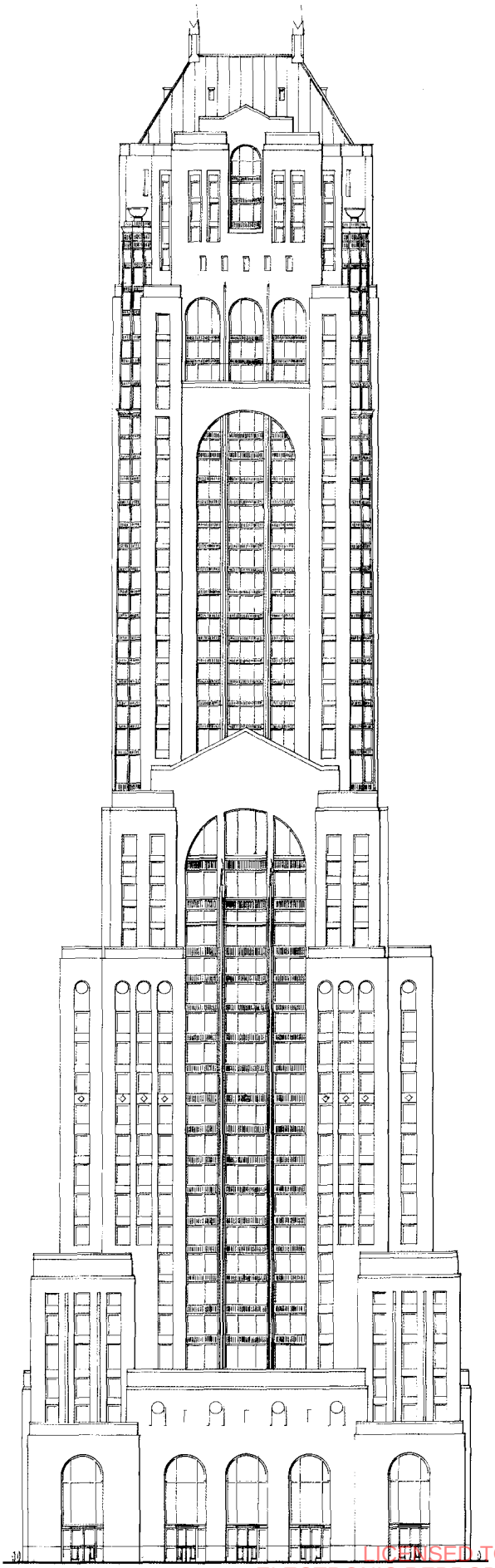

to New Yorkers—and that tourists would wear on their sweatshirts.

The mostly limestone facades, durable and restrainedly luxurious, are pure emanations of the New York skyscraper vernacular tradition. There's ornament in columns and cornices, rustication and pilasters, urns, anthemia, and pediments, with temples and colonnades high in the sky, topped by spires and finials. And two of the buildings have sculptures by Alexander Stoddart (arguably our greatest living sculptor). He has designed atlantes to support the temple at the top of John Simpson's towering column, and an art-deco-inspired grouping of gods and titans for the pediment midway up Franck Lohsen McCrery's building.

All of our buildings have inventive and eye-catching shapes. On the west side of the boulevard, Robert Adam, designer of Oxford University's Sackler Library, envisions a columnar tower that rises out of copper-domed pavilions and culminates in a stepped pyramid. Richard Sammons, who has built country houses and townhouses from Hong Kong to Florida, has designed a suave limestone and glass tower, whose telescoping setbacks, facade articulation like a ballerina's *plié*, and rounded glass corners on its upper half give it a remarkable lightness and powerful upward thrust. Just to the north, John Simpson, architect of the breathtaking Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace, has transformed familiar classical motifs into something entirely unprecedented—a column of glass, complete with fluting, rising from a limestone base and culminating in an exuberant pyramid-topped temple, rotated diagonally to the base.

On the east side of Hudson Boulevard, the buildings similarly grow higher from south to north, promising a remarkable urban vista from the public park at the south end of the entire project. Peter Pennoyer, who has built lavish country houses from coast to coast, imagines a serenely elegant tier of limestone temples, surprising for the powerful tension of its combination of chaste restraint with its profusion of

Left: Richard Sammons's energetically articulated facade makes his limestone-and-glass building seem to spring skyward. Above right: the site.

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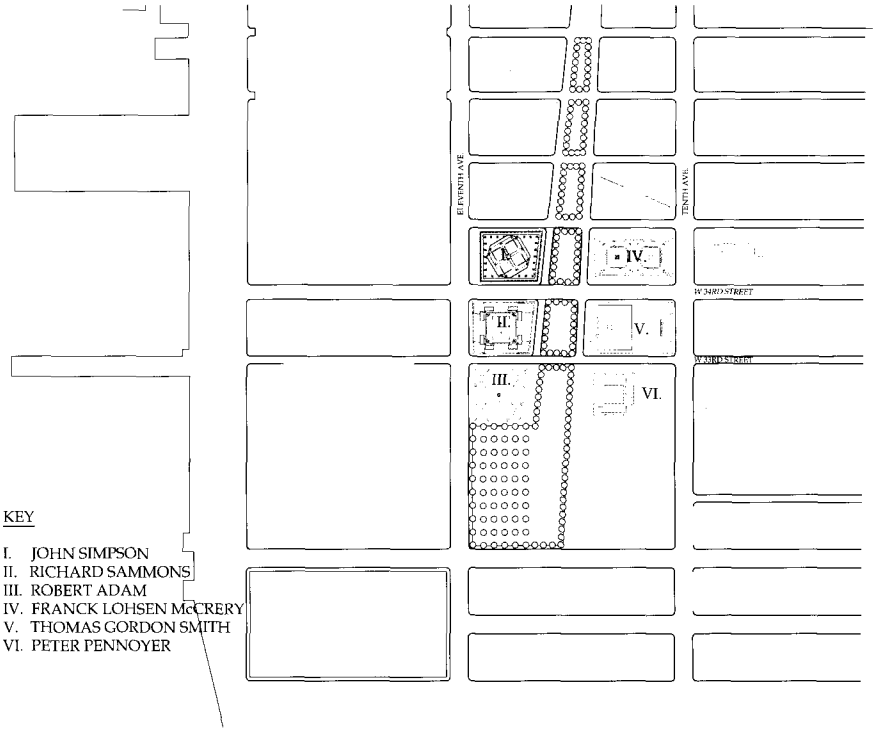
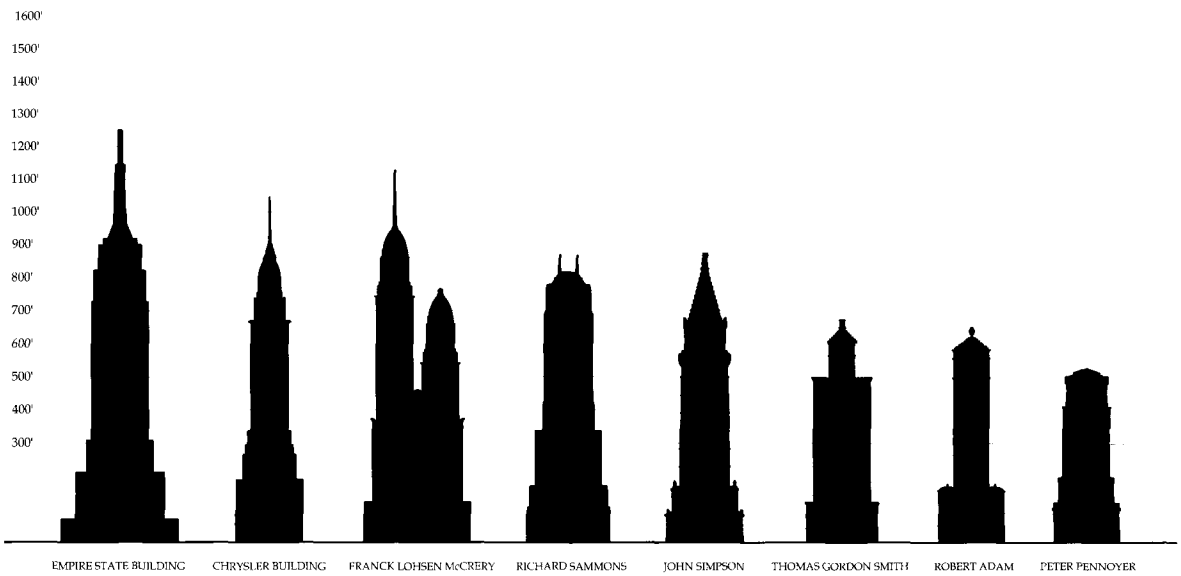


colonnade upon colonnade. One block north, Thomas Gordon Smith, who is designing a new space in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum and whom a recent adulatory profile in the *New York Times* described as "a celebrity architect," raises his tripartite building upon a base that is a nine-story-high, beautifully detailed Italian palazzo—dramatically diverging from its forebears, however, in that it curves inward, embracing the visitor in the concave public space it forms. Still farther north, the firm of Franck Lohsen McCrery, whose projects range from a sumptuous stone country mansion in Virginia to a remarkable vaulted chapel in South Dakota (and whose staff created the computer models of our project printed here), proposes a building whose consummately urbane twin towers, with their vast expanses of glass, soar almost effortlessly to the gilded domes that crown them.

We have carefully followed the Planning Commission's proposed guidelines; but we end with a suggested modification to accomplish with verve and brilliance something the planners forgot to do—getting pedestrians over to the new development from the new Penn Station to be built in the Farley Post Office building. Peter Pennoyer has designed, just across Ninth Avenue from the post office, a public square from which flights of steps rise to a block-wide colonnaded bridge, containing a public park and spanning Tenth Avenue with a triumphal arch to terminate at Pennoyer's tower, now moved just east of Eleventh Avenue. Not only would the plan create a stupendous new public space, but



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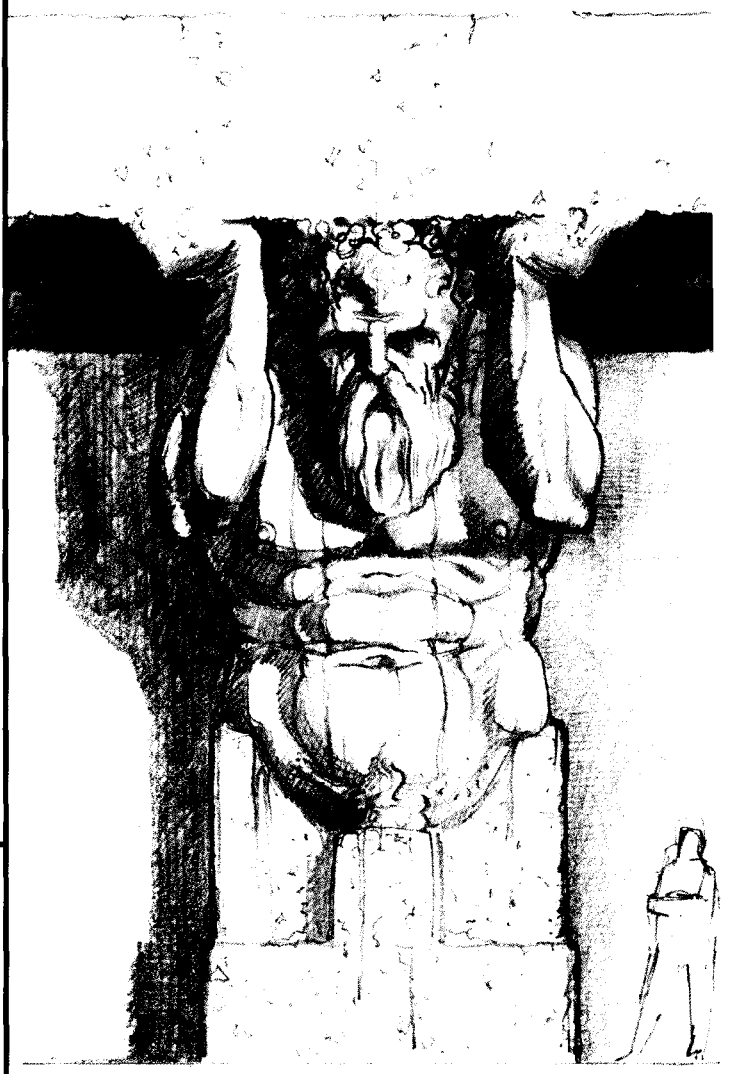
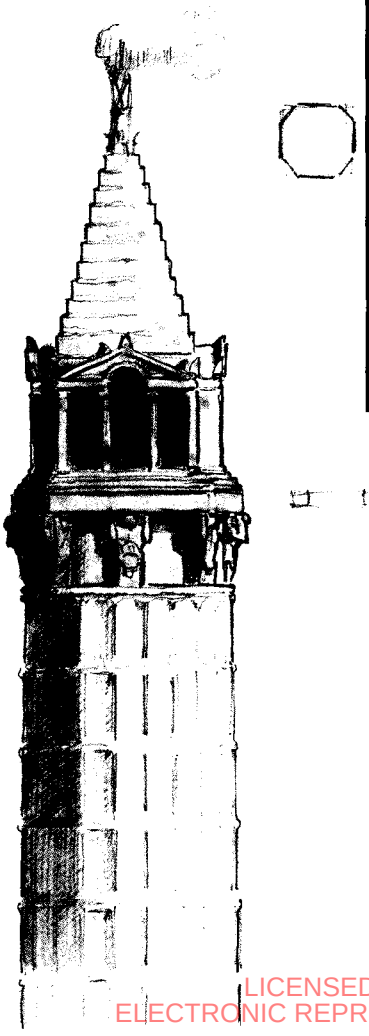
the tower would gracefully terminate the vista looking west from the new Penn Station and looking south down Hudson Boulevard—a supremely sophisticated urbanistic gesture.

If the planners' dreams come true, virtually a new city will arise on these 60 blocks, containing 12 million square feet of residential space and 28 million square feet of offices for 150,000 new workers—in itself one of the nation's largest business districts. This should be a free-market project, with private developers putting up the buildings as the market needs them, not some state-capitalist boondoggle whose burden on taxpayers will ensure that no economic growth will ever take place to fill





Giant sculptures by Alexander Stoddart (above) support the temple at the top of John Simpson's breathtakingly original glass column (far left and right).

the new buildings. All the government needs to do, beyond the re-zoning, is to extend the Number 7 subway to get workers to their new offices. Nor do we think that officials' fantasies of building a new football stadium and convention center extension to the west of this project—occupied only occasionally, forming a forbidding wall of concrete and glass for 12 blocks along Eleventh Avenue, and cutting the new development off from the Hudson River a block away—would foster the kind of upscale development

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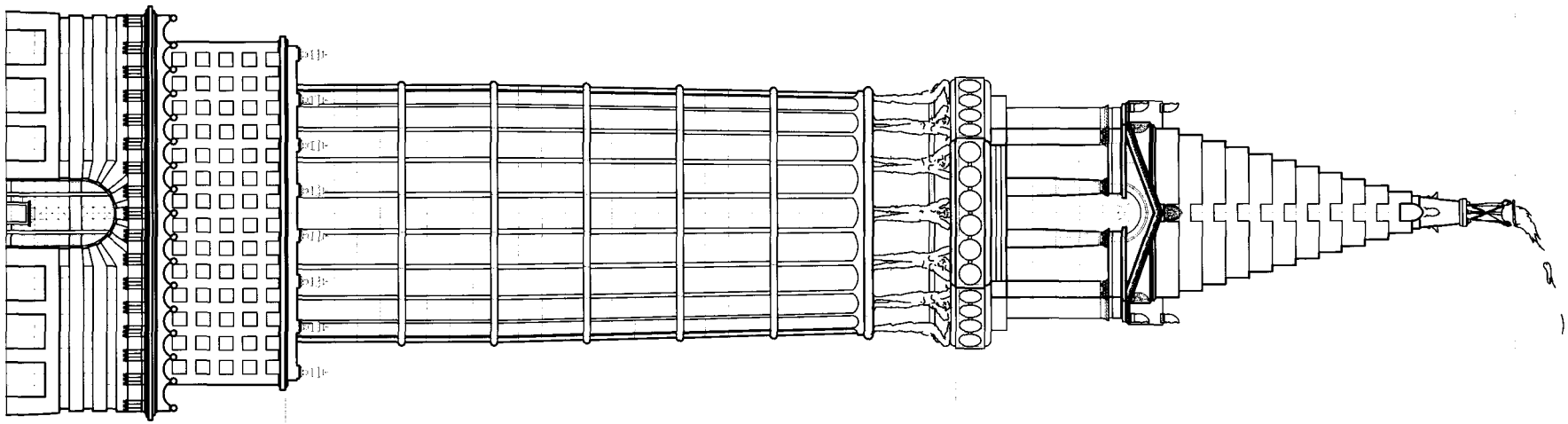
EQUIV. of 65 STORIES

10 STORIES 135' | 10 STORIES 135' | 10 STORIES 135' | 10 STORIES 135' | 10 STORIES 135' | 10 STORIES 135'

GROUND FLOOR | 2nd FLOOR | 6th FLOOR | 7th FLOOR | 12th FLOOR | 14th FLOOR | 38th FLOOR | 41st FLOOR | 42nd FLOOR | 45th FLOOR | 49th FLOOR



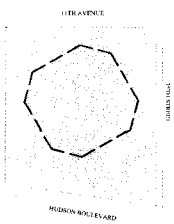
11TH AVENUE ELEVATION
FACING WEST

235'

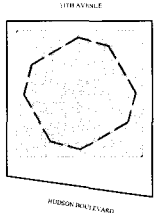
84' | 76'-6" | 389' | 29'-5" | 234'-1" | 60'

873'

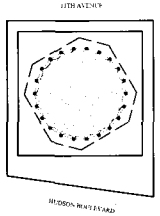
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



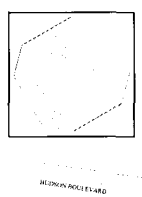
TYPICAL UPPER BASE PLAN
FLOORS 7-12



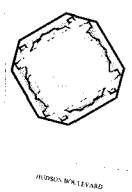
TYPICAL SHAFT PLAN
FLOORS 14-41



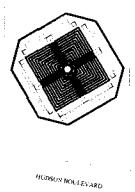
CAPITAL PLAN
FLOOR 43



TEMPLE PLAN
FLOORS 45-49



ROOF PLAN



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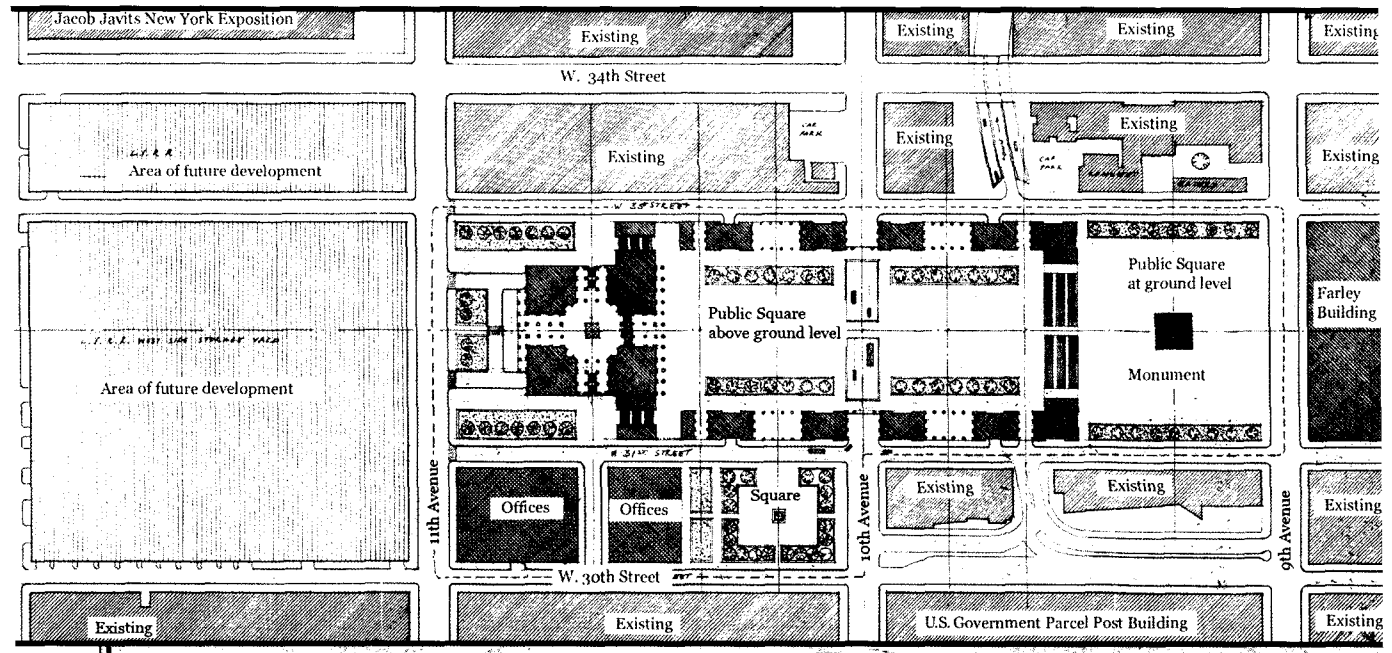

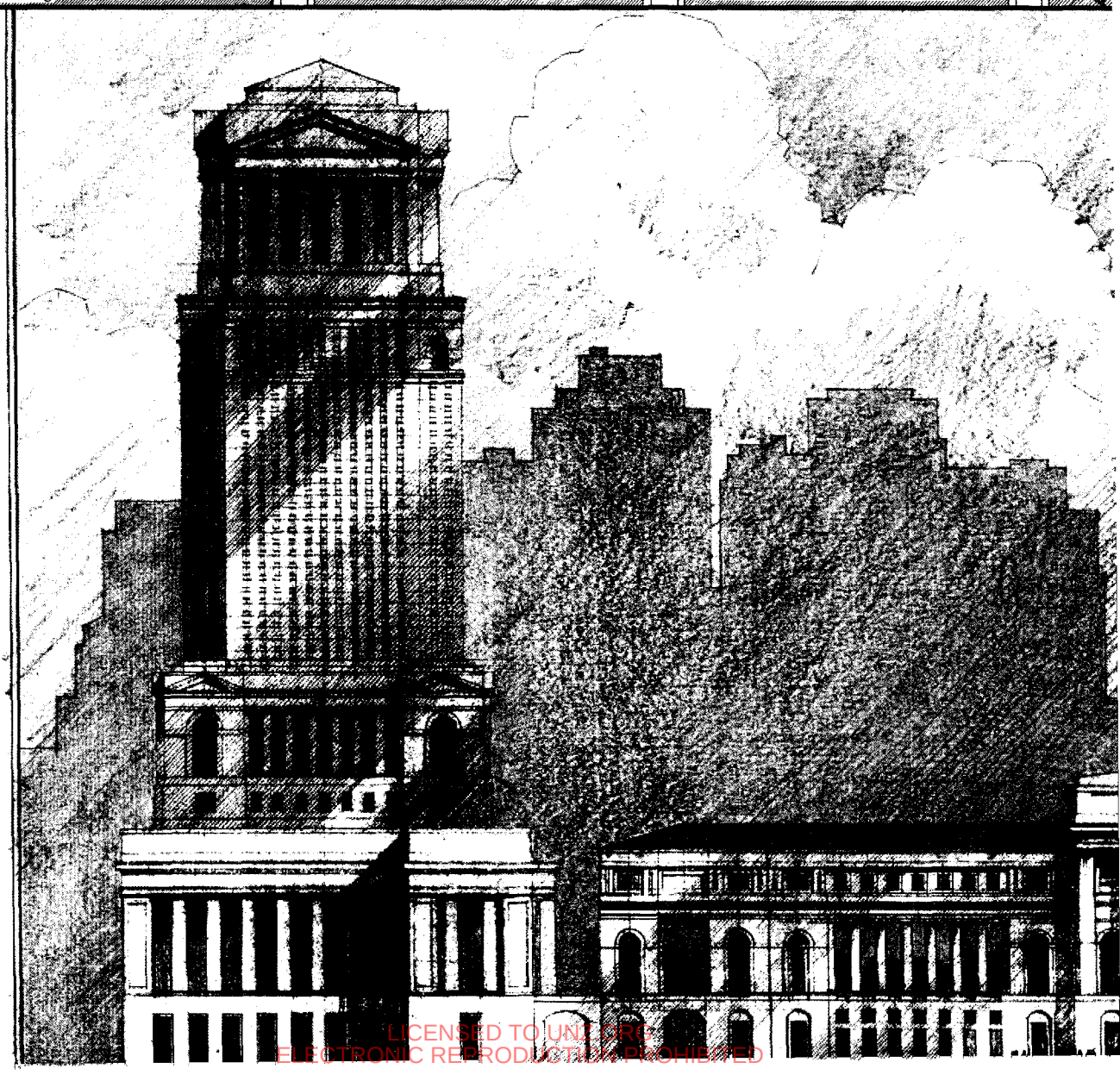

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they hope for, but would rather abort it. But we do know that every time New York has a long boom, lack of sufficient office space cuts it short before it can add permanent new jobs to the economy. The new zoning proposal aims to fix that; and as conditions warrant, we invite developers to pick our plans off the shelf and start construction.

If you build it, they will come.

—*Myron Magnet*

Peter Pennoyer's chastely elegant building terminates the vista across his raised, colonnaded public space spanning Tenth Avenue and connecting the new Penn Station to Hudson Boulevard.

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The Classics in the Slums

Jonathan Rose

In 1988, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, president of the Modern Language Association, authoritatively stated (as something too obvious to require any evidence) that classic literature was always irrelevant to underprivileged people who were not classically educated. It was, she asserted, an undeniable "fact that Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare do not figure significantly in the personal economies of these people, do not perform individual or social functions that gratify their interests, *do not have value for them*."

One should not be too hard on Professor Smith. She was merely echoing what was, at the time, standard academic opinion: that the Western classics embody a worldview that somehow "marginalizes" the poor, the nonwhite, the female, the "other," and justifies their subordination to white male "hegemony." And like so many postmodern critics, Professor Smith could be naively confident that she was in full possession of the facts, even without the benefit of research.

But her theory had no visible means of support. Whenever it was tested, the results were diametrically opposed to what she predicted: in fact "the canon" enabled "the masses" to become thinking individuals. Until fairly recently, Britain had an amazingly vital autodidact culture, where a large minority of the working classes passionately pursued classic literature, philosophy, and music. They were denied the educational privileges that Professor Smith enjoyed, but they knew that the "great books" that she derided would emancipate the workers.

Will Crooks (b. 1852), a cooper living in extreme poverty in East London, once spent tuppence on a second-hand *Iliad*, and was dazzled: "What a revelation it was to me! Pictures of romance and beauty I had never dreamed of suddenly opened up before my eyes. I was transported from the East End to an enchanted land. It was a rare luxury for a working lad like me just home from work to find myself suddenly among the heroes and nymphs of ancient Greece." Nancy Sharman (b. 1925) recalled that her mother, a Southampton charwoman, had no time to read until her last illness, at age 54. Then she devoured the complete works of Shakespeare, and "mentioned pointedly to me that if anything should happen to her, she wished to donate the cornea of her eyes to enable some other unfortunate to read." Margaret Perry (b. 1922) wrote of her mother, a Nottingham dressmaker: "The public library was her salvation. She read four or five books a week all her life but had no one to discuss them with. She had read all the classics several times over in her youth and again in later years, and the library had a job to keep her supplied with current publications. Married to a different man, she could have been an intelligent and interesting woman."

In the nineteenth century, Shakespeare could still attract enthusiastic, rowdy working-class audiences, who commented loudly about the quality of the performances. Caravans of barnstorming actors brought the plays to isolated mining villages. In response to popular demand, Birmingham's Theatre Royal devoted 30 percent of its repertoire to the Bard and other classic dramatists. In 1862, a theater manager provoked a near-riot when he attempted to substitute a modern comedy for an announced production of *Othello*.

Shakespeare provided a political script for labor leaders like J. R. Clynes (b. 1869), who rose from the textile mills of Oldham to become deputy leader of the House of Commons. In his youth he drew inspiration from the "strange truth" he discovered in *Twelfth Night*: "Be not afraid of greatness." "What a creed!" he marveled. "How it would upset the world if men lived up to it." Later, reading *Julius Caesar*, "the realisation came suddenly to me that it was a mighty political drama" about the class struggle, "not just an entertainment." Once he overawed a stubborn employer by reciting an entire scene from the play:

"Margaret," one maid's employer said, "I didn't know you read."

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Clynes, as a friend put it, was "the only man who ever settled a trade dispute by citing Shakespeare." Elected to Parliament in 1906, he read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* while awaiting the returns.

Working-class autodidacts read the classics in part because contemporary literature was too expensive. A 1940 survey found that while 55 percent of working-class adults read books, they rarely bought new books. An autodidact could build up an impressive library by haunting used-book stalls, scavenging castoffs, or buying cheap out-of-copyright reprints such as Everyman's Library, but these offered only yesterday's authors. Thus Welsh collier Joseph Keating (b. 1871) was able to immerse himself in Swift, Pope, Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Keats, Byron, Shelley, Dickens, Thackeray, and Greek philosophy. There was one common denominator among these authors: all were dead. "Volumes by living authors were too high-priced for me," Keating explained, but that did not bother him terribly. "Our school-books never mentioned living writers; and the impression in my mind was that an author, to be a living author, must be dead; and that his work was all the better if he died of neglect and starvation."

Of course, a century ago elementary schools for the British working classes were in many ways grossly inadequate. Classrooms were crowded and under-equipped, discipline was enforced by the cane, and lessons emphasized rote memorization. But the schools taught at least one subject remarkably well. "Thinking back, I am amazed at the amount of English literature we absorbed in those four years," recalled Ethel Clark (b. 1909), a Gloucestershire railway worker's daughter, "and I pay tribute to the man [her teacher] who made it possible. . . . Scott, Thackeray, Shakespeare, Longfellow, Dickens, Matthew Arnold, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Rudyard Kipling were but a few authors we had at our finger-tips. How he made the people live again for us!"

Lancashire weaver Elizabeth Blackburn (b. 1902) conceded that "our horizons were very limited and our education, linked up as it was to our economic conditions, provided little room for the cultivation of leisure pursuits. But I left school at thirteen with a sound grounding in the basic arts of communication, reading and writing. . . . I had gained some knowledge of the Bible, a lively interest in literature and, most important, some impetus to learn." If the objective of public education is to create citizens who never stop learning, then Elizabeth Blackburn's school succeeded brilliantly. When she went to work in the mills she memorized, by the rhythm of the looms, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," Milton's "Lycidas," and Gray's *Elegy*.

Oral-history interviews reveal that, among British working people born between 1870 and 1908, two-thirds had unambiguously positive memories of school. And that fact inevitably raises a disturbing question: whether children today in America's inner cities would give their schools such high marks—and if not, why not?

Even more impressive is a 1940 survey of reading among pupils at nonacademic high schools, where education terminated at age 14. This sample represented something less than the working-class norm: the best students had already been skimmed off and sent to academic secondary schools on scholarship. Those who remained behind were asked which books they had read over the past month, excluding required texts. Even in this below-average group, 62 percent of boys and 84 percent of girls had read some poetry: their favorites included Kipling, Longfellow, Masefield, Blake, Browning, Tennyson, and Wordsworth. Sixty-seven percent of girls and 31 percent of boys had read plays, often something by Shakespeare. All told, these students averaged six or seven books per month. Compare that with the recent NEA study *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, which found that in 2002, 43.4 percent of American adults had not read any books at all, other than those required for work or school. Only 12.1 percent had read any poetry, and only 3.6 percent any plays.

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Urbanities

In the mining towns of South Wales, colliers had pennies deducted from their wages to support their own libraries, more than 100 of them by 1934. The miners themselves determined which books to buy. One such library, the Tredegar Workmen's Institute, devoted 20 percent of its acquisitions budget to philosophy. Another spent 45 pounds on the *Oxford English Dictionary*. (In the best of times, a miner could not earn much more than a pound a day.) There were sophisticated literary debates down in the pits, where one collier heard high praise for George Meredith. That evening, he tried to borrow Meredith's *Love in the Valley* from the local miners' library, only to find 12 names on the waiting list for a single copy. "Every miner has a hobby," explained one Welsh collier. "It may be a reaction from physical strain. The miner works in a dark, strange world. He comes up into light. It is a new world. It is stimulating. He wants to do something. . . . Think what reading means to an active mind that is locked away in the dark for hours every day!"

On company time, and a half-mile below the surface, Nottinghamshire collier G. A. W. Tomlinson (b. 1872) read *The Canterbury Tales*, Lamb's *Essays*, *The Origin of Species*, and Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Admittedly, that could be an occupational hazard: once, when he should have been minding a set of rail switches, he was so absorbed in Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* that he allowed tubs full of coal to crash into empties. The foreman (quite rightly) clouted him and snatched the volume away. He returned it at the end of the shift and offered a few poetry books of his own—"BUT IF THA BRINGS 'EM DARN T'PIT I'LL KNOCK THI BLOCK OFF." Tomlinson tried to write his own verses and concealed them from his workmates, until one of them picked up a page he had dropped and read it: "No good, lad. Tha wants ter read Shelley's stuff. That's *poetry*!"

While studying Greek philosophy at night, Joseph Keating performed one of the toughest and worst-paid jobs in the mine: shoveling out tons of refuse. One day, he was stunned to hear a co-worker sigh, "Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate." "You are quoting Pope," Keating exclaimed. "Ayh," replied his companion, "me and Pope do agree very well." Keating had himself been reading Pope, Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith, and Richardson in poorly printed paperbacks. Later he acquired a violin for 18 shillings, took lessons, and formed a chamber-music quartet, playing Mozart, Corelli, Beethoven, and Schubert—not an uncommon hobby in the coalfields. And he never forgot the electric thrill of pursuing books and music: "Reading of all sorts—philosophy, history, politics, poetry, and novels—was mixed up with my music and other amusements. I was tremendously alive at this period. Everything interested me. Every hour, every minute was crammed with my activities in one direction or another. New, mysterious emotions and passions seemed to be breaking out like little flames from all parts of my body. As soon as the morning sunlight touched my bedroom window, I woke. I did not rise. I leaped up. I flung the bedclothes away from me. They seemed to be burning my flesh. A glorious feeling within me, as I got out of bed, made me sing. My singing was never in tune, but my impulse of joy had to express itself."

Among the same audience, classical music was as popular as classic literature. A century ago one might hear, over the roar of machinery, ironworkers chanting the Pilgrims' Chorus from *Tannhäuser*, or weavers rehearsing *Messiah* or *Elijah*. A 1938 BBC survey found that orchestral music was as popular as cricket broadcasts, attracting half of all working-class listeners. Another 15 percent enjoyed grand opera and piano recitals.

The Workers' Educational Association, founded in 1903 (and still a going concern today), brought university-level adult courses in literature, history, science, and economics to the mill towns. The students were intensely dedicated: they had to be, given the realities of their lives. One pottery engineer recorded that, over a 26-week period, he worked an average of 74.5 hours per week, then wrote 14

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essays for his WEA course, and also delivered a total of 25 lectures to various other classes.

The WEA offered no grades, no degrees, and no vocational courses. The only motive for study was the disinterested pursuit of learning, and the students vehemently rejected any kind of occupational training. "Knowledge for its own sake is a better principle," said one. "Adult education is often a way of escape from the tedious monotony of working life. Give as wide a range of subjects as possible and let the student follow his bent." "We want freedom of mind, power and expression," wrote another, "and for that reason wish to dissociate work and study."

Because the WEA brought to the masses the kind of liberal education that Matthew Arnold had championed, some doctrinaire Marxists denounced it. Proletarian novelist Ethel Carnie warned that the pursuit of literature and art would simply "chloroform" the workers, who should focus instead "on the narrow, rigid, and distinctly not impartial facts deduced from the experience of our own exploited class." But WEA students found these assaults offensively condescending. "Will Miss Carnie be good enough to show where the chloroforming process comes in?" shot back garment worker Lavena Saltonstall. "Greek art will never keep the workers from claiming their world; in fact, it will help them to realise what a stunted life they have hitherto led. Nothing that is beautiful will harm the workers," who were perfectly able "to hear a lecture on industrial history, or economics, or Robert Browning, and remain quite sane. As a Socialist, as a trade unionist, as a suffragist . . . I resent Miss Carnie's suggestion that the WEA educational policy can ever make me forget the painful history of Labour, or chloroform my senses to the miseries that I see around me." And (Miss Saltonstall wound up) if anyone thinks "that a working man or woman is liable to be sidetracked or made neutral or impartial because they look at all sides of a question in order to understand it fully, then they are libelling the intelligence of the working classes."

In fact, a 1936 survey found that the WEA had created an articulate and obstreperous working-class intelligentsia. The typical alumnus was active in local politics and trade unions, someone who "tackles the town Library Committee for banning Shaw's *Black Girl*; challenges the local clergy to show more social zeal; tells the mill-owners what is wrong with their policy; ventilates the local lack of facilities for cultural education; indicts the municipal fathers for their failure to provide a park or an adequate tram-service." In this vein, the same NEA survey that reported that book reading was declining among all classes of Americans also found a very strong correlation between literary pursuits and community service. In 2002, half of all American adults who read 12 or more books a year also performed volunteer or charity work, compared with only one in six of those who read no books. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold insists that if we pursue culture, "the best that is known and thought in the world," we will also work to create a better world. A growing body of sociological and historical evidence supports that conclusion.

Yet many contemporary academic critics (following in the tradition of the WEA's Marxist adversaries) are more concerned to scrutinize literary texts for signs of political deviation, sniffing out hints of imperialist, misogynist, or bourgeois ideology. This approach to literature is not only formulaic, one-dimensional, and dull; it also fails to consider the experiences of actual readers, who often found "reactionary" authors radically emancipating. No doubt Thomas Carlyle was a cranky male supremacist, but for Elizabeth Bryson (b. 1880), the daughter of an impoverished Dundee bookkeeper, he offered "the exciting experience of being kindled to the point of explosion by the fire of words." Carlyle's "gospel of work" so inspired her that she was driven to win a university degree and become a distinguished New Zealand physician. When Catherine McMullen (b. 1906), a workhouse laundress, came across a reference to the *Letters Written by Lord Chesterfield to His Son*, she visited a public library for the first time in her life and borrowed it. "And here began

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Far from oppressing or indoctrinating the poor, classic literature liberated their minds and gave them a sense of their own unique identities.

my education. With Lord Chesterfield I read my first mythology. I learned my first real history and geography. With Lord Chesterfield I went travelling the world. I would fall asleep reading the letters and awake around three o'clock in the morning my mind deep in the fascination of this new world, where people conversed, not just talked. Where the brilliance of words made your heart beat faster."

Chesterfield launched Catherine McMullen into a lifetime course of reading, beginning with Chaucer in Middle English, moving on to Erasmus, Donne, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and even *Finnegans Wake*. Ultimately, as Catherine Cookson, she became one of the best-selling authors of all time, producing more than 90 novels with total sales of more than 100 million copies, at one point responsible for one-third of all the books loaned by Britain's public libraries. "Dear, dear Lord Chesterfield," she sighed. "Snob or not I owe him so much."

Just as Edmund Burke offered a literary model to young Irving Howe, Sir Walter Scott was profoundly inspirational to T. A. Jackson (b. 1879), the most brilliant (and scruffiest) proletarian intellectual to come out of the British Communist Party. Jackson admitted that Scott "was a shocking old Tory, and a reactionary," but he insisted that one could read *Ivanhoe* as a critique of capitalism: "The gallantry and efficiency of Robin Hood, and his outlaws, the sturdy courage of the Saxons, and jolly Friar Tuck, the intrepid valour, strength and chivalry of Coeur de Lion, [represented] all that was English and opposite to money-greedy meanness."

Jackson's syllabus for self-education was the "Hundred Best Books," a list published by social reformer Sir John Lubbock in 1886. Like Mortimer Adler's Great Books Course (which it resembled and anticipated), it was widely derided as an anachronistic

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compendium of prepackaged literature. But for Jackson it was profoundly liberating, a vehicle for redistributing cultural wealth to the masses. "Expensively educated comrades" laughed at him for saying so, but the act of reading through nearly all of those 100 books set in motion an intellectual odyssey that eventually brought Jackson to Marxism, though Marx was certainly not on the list:

> It drove me into reading translations of the Greek and Roman authors I would never have faced otherwise. It started me off upon an intensive study of English poetry and, thereafter upon a similar study of Romance and Saga literature. It taught me that there were other branches of literature than prose fiction, and other dramatic writers than Shakespeare. It taught me Shakespeare was something much more than an old bore invented to plague the lives of schoolboys. It drove me back upon a wider grasp of history—since I found in practice that there were other literatures than English—literatures of at least equal merit. I found too that all could be understood only in their historical sequence. In the end it led me to philosophy and Marxism and thereby to the revolutionising of my whole life. . . . Whether he desired it or not, [Lubbock] gave me the urge which sent me adventuring with courage and confidence until I had found them all for myself.

With that powerful streak of intellectual independence, Jackson inevitably ran afoul of the Communist Party hierarchy. "The party line," he once sighed, "is always moving in a circle." Early British Marxists tended to dismiss as "bourgeois" the same classic literature that autodidacts found so liberating, a fact that goes a long way toward explaining why Marxism failed to gain a following among British workers. As the manifesto of the Communist-affiliated Workers' Theatre Movement proclaimed, "It rejects decisively the role of raising the cultural levels of the workers through contact with great dramatic art." That ruled out Shakespeare and just about every other important playwright: even Sean O'Casey was considered ideologically unsafe. Ewan MacColl was a Communist and the son of a Communist iron-founder, but he had been raised on Gogol, Dostoevsky, Balzac, and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and he found the party's agitprop drama an insult to his intelligence. "We had a strong feeling that we were being written down to," he remembered. "I've noticed frequently that among middle-class party people that I've worked with, over the years, that there's an idea that workers will accept anything, providing the message is OK. The quality doesn't matter, the form doesn't matter. All that matters is that we agree on the correct slogans."

The proletarian intellectual often met with suspicion from his employers as well as his workmates, who doubted (as Barbara Herrnstein Smith doubted) that literature could have any value for the working classes. Housemaid Margaret Powell (b. 1907) read *Remembrance of Things Past* three times over, but her allusions to Dickens and Conrad were likely to scare away boys. She worked for an aristocratic lady in Chelsea, who, considerate and liberal-minded in every other respect, was thoroughly nonplussed when her servant asked to borrow a book from her library. "Yes, of course, certainly you can, Margaret—but I didn't know you read."

> They knew that you breathed and you slept and you worked, but they didn't know that you *read*. Such a thing was beyond comprehension. They thought that in your spare time you sat and gazed into space. . . . You could almost see them reporting you to their friends. "Margaret's a good cook, but unfortunately she reads. Books, you know."

For all his gentle liberalism, even E. M. Forster shared that class prejudice. In his 1910 novel *Howards End*, the pathet-

From miners to weavers, English workers read voraciously.

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ic clerk Leonard Bast tries to acquire a veneer of culture, but his efforts are hopeless. He plays the piano "badly and vulgarly," and what is worse, he plays Grieg. In literary conversations, he is only capable of repeating cant phrases and dropping names. Aping his betters, he struggles to understand John Ruskin, simply because he has been told that Ruskin is "the greatest master of English prose." In the end, Bast is literally crushed and killed by books. He would have been better off as a mindless peasant: that is Forster's unmistakable message.

The reality was profoundly different. The founders of Britain's Labour Party identified Ruskin, more than anyone else, as the author who had electrified their minds and inspired a vision of social justice. At the time, the brightest working-class boys often entered clerkdom, one of the few professions then open to them, and they often brought to their office an incandescent intellectual passion. Neville Cardus (b. 1889) was an insurance clerk, like Leonard Bast, but he burned with a hard, gemlike flame when he argued with his Manchester friends over

> Elgar, Shaw, Wells, Ibsen, Nietzsche, Strauss, Debussy, the French Impressionists; our first tastes of Stendahl, the de Goncourts, J-K Huysmans . . . ; then, before our sight had become accustomed to the fresh vista, the Russians swept down on us—Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Tchekov, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and the ballet. . . . There were not enough hours to the day for a young man. We never went straight home after a new play by Shaw, after *Gerontius*, after the A flat symphony, after Kreisler had played the Elgar violin concerto for the first time, after *Tristan*, after Strauss's *Salome*. . . . We walked the city streets, we talked and talked . . . not to air our economic grievances, not to 'spout' politics and discontent, but to relieve the ferment of our minds or emotions after the impact of *Man and Superman, Elektra, Riders to the Sea, Pélleas et Mélisande, Shéhérazade, Prince Igor*.

None of this interested Forster or, for that matter, most literary scholars of the past 25 years. Some of the latter did investigate the responses of readers, but not "common" readers. The audience that mattered, wrote Cornell University deconstructionist Jonathan Culler, consisted of "oneself, one's students, colleagues, and other critics"—all members of the academic club. The notion "that one should rush out armed with questionnaires to interview the reader in the street" he found disturbingly democratic. As a result, academic literary criticism became ever more ingrown, disengaged from the general public, and fractured into several mutually unintelligible theoretical sects. The problem, as Modern Language Association president Stephen Greenblatt recently put it, is not that literature professors are only writing for other literature professors. In fact, these professors are no longer buying and reading one another's books. University presses, consequently, often cannot sell the few hundred copies needed to break even on a scholarly monograph.

Professor Greenblatt is at a loss for a solution, except to suggest that no one leave the MLA convention without buying a book from the publishers' exhibits. Assuming that every other MLA member has published a book, this would increase the average sales of each by two copies. Clearly, something more radical needs to be done. Literary studies, I suggest, could be revitalized, and could once again engage the general public, by turning its attention to the ordinary reader in history.

Some groundbreaking scholars have done precisely that. In *The Cheese and the Worms* (1980), Carlo Ginzburg recovered the story of Menocchio, a miller in sixteenth-century Italy who acquired and read (with a highly independent mind) a vernacular Bible, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, travel books, perhaps even the Qur'an. In *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780–1835* (1989), William Gilmore found Vermont farmers stocking their home libraries with Homer, Virgil, Cicero, Dr.

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Johnson, Walter Scott, Oliver Goldsmith, Laurence Sterne, and John Locke. In *Readers and Society in Nineteenth-Century France: Workers, Women, Peasants* (2001), Martyn Lyons discovered workingmen who haunted second-hand bookstalls along the Seine, devouring Châteaubriand, Alexandre Dumas, Goethe, Shakespeare, and the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment. Elizabeth McHenry's prizewinning *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African-American Literary Societies* (2002) unearthed a tradition we scarcely knew existed: black Americans discussing Milton, Spenser, Homer, Aeschylus, Longfellow, Dryden, Pope, Browning, Pindar, and Sappho, as well as Paul Lawrence Dunbar. Impressive networks of workers' libraries were set up not just by Welsh colliers, but also by Colorado miners, the Social Democratic Party in imperial Germany, trade unions in interwar Poland, study circles in Sweden, the Histadrut labor federation in mandatory Palestine, and anarchists in pre-Franco Spain. And in Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize–winning drama, *Anna in the Tropics*, cigar makers listen to the classics read aloud while they work—a Cuban tradition, but also practiced in many other parts of the world. Everywhere we look, in a diversity of cultures and historical periods, we find "common" readers tackling remarkably challenging literature.

Stephen Greenblatt actually writes quite eloquently about the magic of reading—that "silent moment, constantly renewed, in which we feel that someone—often someone long vanished into dust, someone who could not conceivably have known our names or conjured up our existence or spoken our language—is sending us a message." That is an insight so perfectly framed that I can add nothing to it—except to suggest that we look for that magic in an unfamiliar place.

After all, for years English professors have argued back and forth whether (for example) Thomas Hardy oppresses or empowers women, without resolving the issue. I propose we seek a third opinion—perhaps the only opinion that really counts here. Edith Hall was an overworked housemaid who discovered Hardy in a WEA class in the 1920s. Back then, she recalled,

> *Punch* and other publications of that kind showed cartoons depicting the servant class as stupid and "thick" and therefore fit subjects for their jokes. The skivvy [low-level female domestic servant] particularly was revealed as a brainless menial. Many of the working-class were considered thus and Thomas Hardy wrote in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* that "Labouring farm folk were personified in the newspaper-press by the pitiable dummy known as Hodge. . . . " and it was in this book that Hardy told the story of Tess, a poor working girl with an interesting character, thoughts and personality. This was the first serious novel I had read up to this time in which the heroine had not been of "gentle birth" and the labouring classes as brainless automatons. This book made me feel human and even when my employers talked at me as though I wasn't there, I felt that I could take it; I knew that I could be a person in my own right.

Today, in America's inner cities, there may be more Edith Halls than you dare to hope. Kurt Wootton taught English at a Providence high school where the students were almost all black and half of them dropped out before graduation. He assigned them Richard Wright's *Black Boy* and jazz by John Coltrane, which they found hopelessly irrelevant. Then he organized ArtsLit, a summer program that brings students from Rhode Island's worst high schools to the Brown University campus to study and perform *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. And these long-dead authors clearly sent the kids a message, as high school teacher Richard Kinslow found when he had his ESL class prepare a production of *Macbeth*. One of his students was the type who got suspended about once a week, but he would sneak into school for the daily rehearsals. His

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motivation was precisely the same as Edith Hall's. "These kids had never been actively involved in any part of school except gym and art," explained Kinslow. "Doing Shakespeare honored them. If you want to talk about self-respect and pride, it made a big difference."

At Chicago's Wilbur Wright College, where the majority of students are immigrants, nonwhite, or both, Professor Bruce Gans runs a successful Great Books Curriculum, with an enrollment of about 900. Students in this program, compared with their schoolmates, greatly improve their writing skills, have far higher graduation rates, and are better prepared to transfer to four-year colleges. Meanwhile, Earl Shorris has developed the Clemente Course, a classical curriculum aimed specifically at people living in poverty. His first syllabus ranged from Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* to William Blake and D. H. Lawrence. And yes, Plato is intensely relevant to former drug addicts. "Those of us in the grip of addiction use this process to rethink our lives," one student explains. "Socrates makes clear that you have to have the courage to examine yourself and to stand up for something. A lot of us have justified our weaknesses for too long a time."

So don't despair, Professor Greenblatt. There is a way to make literature once again exciting and life-transforming for "common" readers—if only you would grasp it. ■

How to Steal an Election

John Fund

The 2000 Florida election debacle led many Americans to worry about the integrity of our voting system. They're right to worry: the system is haphazard and sloppy. How sloppy? Well, at least eight of the 19 foreign-national September 11 hijackers had registered to vote in either Florida or Virginia.

Election fraud is expanding. This past March, in just one of many recent cases, Texas representative Ciro Rodriguez, chairman of the congressional Hispanic Caucus, lost a close Democratic primary after a missing ballot box suddenly showed up in South Texas, stuffed with votes for his opponent. Rodriguez charged fraud but could never definitively prove it. The circumstances were eerily similar to those that tipped a 1948 Senate race to Lyndon Johnson. Election officials found ballot box 13 several days after the election. It held 203 votes, all but one for LBJ. Amazingly enough, the voters had cast their ballots in alphabetical order.

With nearly 10 percent of Americans now believing that the election system doesn't count their votes accurately, and with new charges of fraud beginning to swirl around the 2004 presidential election, it's worth taking a look back at the nation's long tradition of electoral shenanigans. It's comic—until you start to wonder just how much of it is still going on.

Nowhere did voter fraud have a more notorious record than in Tammany-era New York. Tammany Hall's ruthless efficiency in manufacturing votes—especially during the zenith of its power in the second half of the nineteenth century—is legendary. At the time, America didn't yet have privacy-protecting voting machines or official government ballots, so Tammany fixers could ensure that voters would cast ballots as promised. Vote riggers would simply give people premarked ballots and watch as they deposited them into the voting box.

Practical Tammany pols preferred to deal with "strikers"—wholesale operatives who would guarantee thick bundles of votes, for a price. One New York candidate who hadn't yet paid his strikers made the mistake of visiting the polls on Election Day. The angry operatives swiftly surrounded him, demanding their cash. Historian Mark Summers recounts that "the politician was nearly torn to pieces . . . and as he fled the pack cursed him for 'a mean cuss' and emptied out the ballot-boxes, tearing up every ticket bearing his name."

The immigrants flooding into New York were easy prey for the Tammany pols. Each state then set its own standards for

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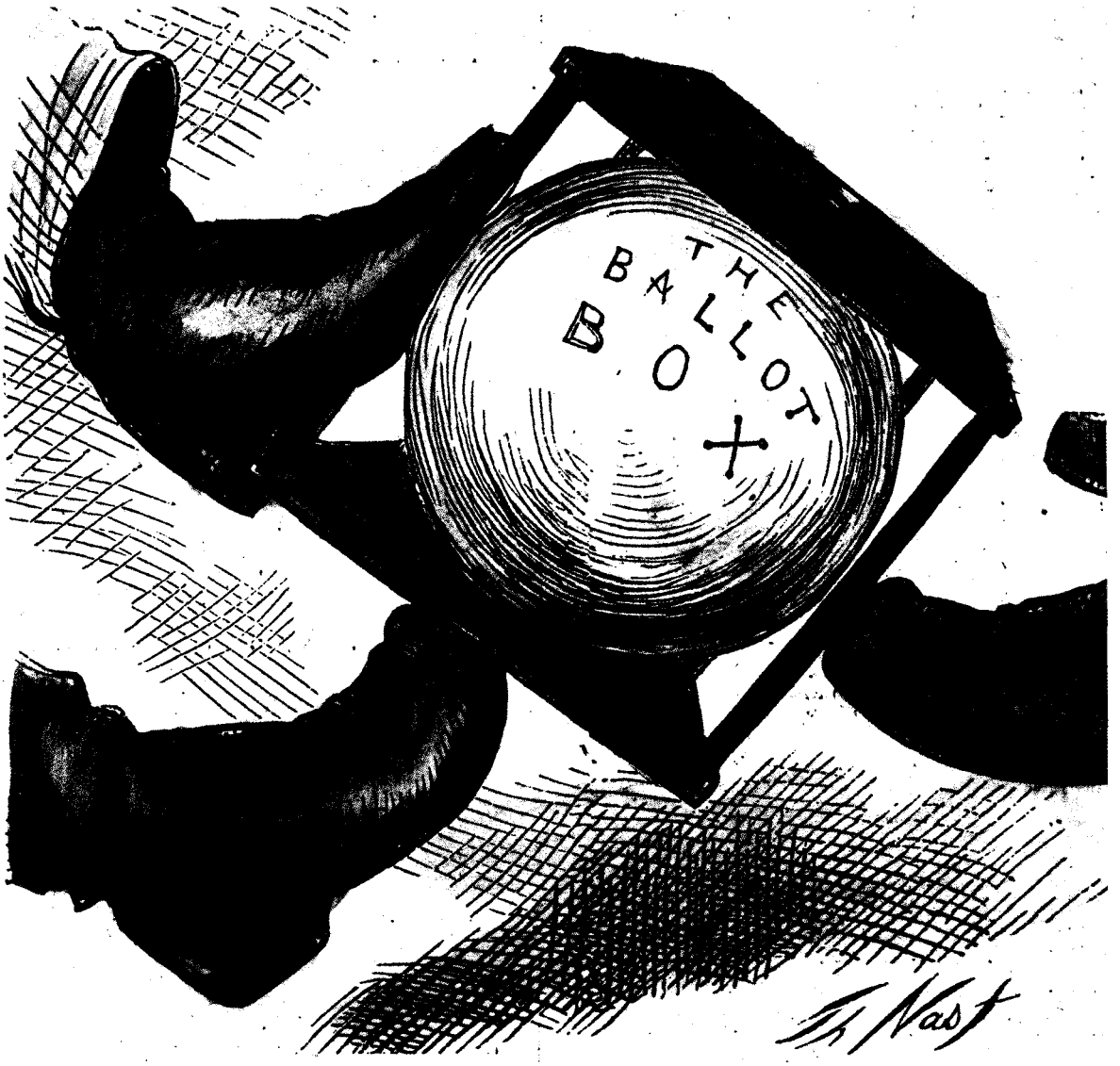

THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

After massive voter fraud on both sides, the 1876 presidential election was decided by the House.

naturalizing new citizens, and New York's were lax. In 1868, *The Nation* reported that Tammany Hall had set up a "naturalization mill," instantly certifying folks right off the boat as citizens—and Tammany voters. (In 1996, the Clinton administration similarly sped up the naturalization of up to 1 million new citizens so that they could vote in time for that year's election.)

Tammany was so efficient at election fixing that between 1868 and 1871, the votes cast in the city totaled 8 percent more than the entire voting population—"the dead filling in for the sick," as one contemporary wag put it. Historian Denis Tilden Lynch describes how thugs would go from one polling place to the next,

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THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

"I don't think there was ever a fair or honest election in the City of New York," Boss Tweed (caricatured above) testified.

impersonating citizens who hadn't yet voted. One such "repeater" posed as the dignified pastor of a Dutch Reformed church. The election clerks asked him his name.

"Jones," shouted the repeater, startling the poll workers with his scraggly beard, unclean face, and whiskey breath.

"What is the first name, Mr. Jones?" asked the election clerk. "John," snarled the repeater.

"The Reverend Dr. John Jones, pastor of the Dutch Reformed church around the corner?" asked a clerk.

"Yes, you dirty, lousy @$#%%^^**!" exclaimed the repeater. "Who'n else did you thick I was, eh?"

The officials let "Reverend Jones" vote.

After his fall from power, the infamous Tammany Hall leader William Marcy Tweed—Boss Tweed—candidly assessed the conduct of elections in his city. His 1877 testimony before the New York Board of Aldermen remains fascinating for its matter-of-fact explication of how to corrupt democracy:

Q: "When you were in office, did the [Tweed] Ring control the elections in the city at that time?"

A: "They did sir. Absolutely."

Q: "Please tell me what the modus operandi of that was. How did you control the elections?"

A: "Well, each ward had a representative man, who would control matters in his own ward, and whom the various members of the general committee were to look up to for advice how to control the elections."

Q: "What were they to do, in case you wanted a particular man elected over another?"

A: "Count the ballots in bulk, or without counting them announce the result in bulk, or change from one to the other, as the case may have been."

Q: "Then these elections really were no elections at all? The ballots were made to bring about any result that you determined upon beforehand?"

A: "The ballots made no result; the counters made the result. . . . That was generally done to every ward by the gentleman who had charge of the ward."

Q: "Mr. Tweed, did you ever

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give any directions to any persons, to falsify or change the result of the actual bona fide ballots cast in any election?"

A. "More in the nature of a request than a directive."

Later in Tweed's testimony, this exchange occurred:

Q: "Can you state now, at this time, whether the election which took place in the City of New York at that time [1868] was a fair and honest election?"

A: "I have not the details in my memory."

Q: "What is your best impression?"

A: "I don't think there was ever a fair or honest election in the City of New York."

Tammany's fraud was so all-encompassing, says historian Mark Summers, that "even men who have passed through history with clean reputations thought little of raising a majority that way." Henry Raymond, co-founder and first editor of the *New York Times*, railed against corruption. But when he ran for speaker of the New York State Assembly in 1851, he asked Senator Hamilton Fish for $1,000, so that he could buy the election. "Truly a pretty suggestion," Fish confided to his diary, "but corruption in connection with these primary elections has become so prevalent that one loses astonishment at its evidence in any quarter."

Boss Tweed died in disgrace, but Tammany Hall flourished into the twentieth century. In 1905, William Randolph Hearst, owner of the New York *Morning Journal*, decided to take Tammany on and run for New York mayor on the ticket of his own third party, the Municipal Ownership League. Hearst had already beaten a Tammany-backed candidate in 1902, winning a New York congressional seat with a lavish campaign that would have put New Jersey senator Jon Corzine to shame. Hearst spent the equivalent of $100,000 for fireworks in Madison Square Park and offered free trips to Coney Island for every man, woman, and child in his district.

But Hearst bit off more than he could buy in running for mayor—a key position in the Tammany empire. On election day, notes Hearst biographer David Nasaw, "there were instances of voter fraud, of poll watchers being chased away, of delays in reporting returns, of unopened and uncounted ballot boxes mysteriously turning up in the East River." The *New York Independent* declared it "the most extraordinary election ever witnessed in New York City"—and that's saying something. The *New York Times* reported that the challenger's poll watchers, having been beaten up and driven off by Tammany goons, "came into the Hearst headquarters last night with bandaged hands. Some carried their arms in slings. At about ten o'clock in the evening a report was received that the returns were being held back from these districts"—presumably as Tammany stuffed the ballot boxes to achieve the desired count. One poll watcher, an R. Little, "had a finger chewed off and his face cut."

While the newspapers deplored the violence, they also expressed relief that incumbent Tammany mayor George Brinton McClellan beat Hearst, by a margin of 3,472 votes out of more than 600,000 "cast." The *New York Times* congratulated city voters for having "spared the city the humiliation, the trials, and the dangers of a four years' mismanagement of its affairs by a peculiarly reckless, unschooled, and unsteady group of experimenters and adventurers."

Hearst believed that he had won the election as ballots went into the boxes but lost it as they came out. After organizing a blue-ribbon committee to protest the fraud and demand a recount, he held massive demonstrations throughout the city and went to court. But the courts and the state legislature ignored him, and no recount took place.

New York City's corruption, severe as it was, was far from unique. In Baltimore, for instance, vote fixing could get even uglier: a notorious Whig Party organization, the "Fourth Ward Club," hired thugs to seize innocent strangers and foreigners, drug them with bad whiskey and opiates, and send them out to cast multiple votes. (James Harrison, a biographer of Edgar Allan Poe, speculates that when Poe died in 1849, he was a victim of ruthless vote-fraud toughs

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who kidnapped him and left him drunk and near death on a Baltimore street.) Political scientists estimate that in many urban areas, fixers routinely manipulated 10 to 15 percent of the vote. A 1929 study by the Brookings Institution, looking back on U.S. elections in the nineteenth century, observed: "[I]ndifference, fraud, corruption, and violence have marked the operation of our electoral system."

The corruption influenced national as well as local politics. Both major parties stole votes with abandon in the 1876 presidential election between Republican Rutherford Hayes of Ohio and Samuel Tilden of New York. The race ended in a deadlock, resolved only after a congressionally created commission delivered the presidency to Hayes by a single, disputed electoral vote. At least three other presidential elections—in 1880, 1884, and 1888—proved so close that fraud may have played a role in their outcomes, too.

As the century closed, however, fraud gradually began to diminish, as popular disgust with vote rigging spurred reforms. States began to require voters to register before Election Day. In Massachusetts, Richard Henry Dana III, son of the author of the classic *Two Years Before the Mast*, persuaded the Massachusetts legislature to adopt the "Australian" ballot—a government-printed ballot that would list all candidates and that voters would cast in secret in a booth. It became a model for reformers elsewhere. As changes spread to other states, voter "turnout" fell precipitously. Historians Gary Cox and Morgan Krause point out that turnout in New York State elections dropped some 15 percent after the anti-fraud measures took effect.

Voter fraud didn't vanish from American politics, of course—jokes still circulate about the late Chicago mayor Richard Daley's uncanny ability to get the dead to vote for him. But first prize for twentieth-century electoral corruption goes to Mayor Frank "I Am the Law" Hague, whose political machine controlled gritty Jersey City, New Jersey, across the Hudson River from New York, from 1917 to 1947. His desk had a special drawer that opened in the front, allowing visitors to deposit bribes that then disappeared inside the desk. On a yearly salary of $8,000, he amassed a fortune of at least $10 million.

Hague's career began inauspiciously, as you might expect. Expelled from school after sixth grade as incorrigible, he became a ward heeler for the Jersey City Democratic machine. In 1908, he entered city employment as a janitor. Ten years later, he was mayor, and, through his control of the Hudson County vote, the leader of the state Democratic Party and the man who could dictate who would become governor or a judge. In 1939, so great was Hague's power that he could order his handpicked governor to appoint his son, Frank Hague Jr., to the state supreme court, even though the young man had never graduated from law school.

The Hague machine turned voter fraud into a science. On the Sunday before an election, the mayor would gather his ward heelers into a Jersey City arena (called the Grotto) and give his orders. "Three hundred and sixty-four days a year you come to me wanting favors. . . . Now, one day in the year I come to you." Hague fielded roughly one worker per 100 voters, and boy, did he get results. In 1937, the Democratic candidate in the First District of the First Ward won 433 votes, the Republican only one. This struck some people as odd, since a short time earlier, the district had recorded 103 Republican votes. An investigation found torn ballots, others with unmistakable erasure marks, and yet others altered by pencil. The single Republican ballot, marked with a red pencil, "could not have been erased without doing definite damage to the ballot," investigators noted.

Reformers were always trying to clean up Jersey City elections, but they faced an uphill fight. In 1935, the Honest Ballot Association sent 245 Princeton students to monitor a city election. Hague's ruffians beat up five of them within an hour of their arrival. Several others, ejected from a polling place, went to see the mayor to protest. "Well, you fellows go back there if you wish, but if you get knocked cold it will

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be your own hard luck," he told them. Later, Hague explained to *Collier's* magazine that the roughing-up involved "[a]nimal spirits, that's all. I told my boys to lay off, but it was a pretty dull election, and they couldn't resist the temptation to have a little fun."

In 1937, the *Jersey Journal* asked in a disgusted editorial: "Where was Election Superintendent Ferguson's 1,300 deputies when the new irregularities now charged occurred last Tuesday?" In response, the superintendent issued a public statement that read, in part: "Where were my deputies? Some of them were locked up in the police stations; some were stuck on corners, with a threat that if they moved from them, a night stick would be wrapped around their necks . . . . The only way to have an honest election in Hudson County under present conditions is with the militia."

Mayor Hague retired from office in 1947, turning over the job of mayor to his nephew. Gradually, his machine lost control of the city, though Jersey's politics remain far from pristine to this day. Nevertheless, Hague's flagrant vote rigging was extreme for post-Tammany American politics.

DEMOCRATIC PROGRAMME FOR NOVEMBER.

FIRST DEMOCRATIC REPEATER. "Mr. President, this is Mike M'Ginnis; wants to join our Club. He's got lots of naturalization papers, and is going to vote 'em in every ward—he is."

SECOND DEMOCRATIC REPEATER. "You bet!"

[*The qualifications are at once decided to be sufficient, the candidate is declared eligible, and at once enrolled.*

HARPWEEK

Democrats sent immigrants straight off the boat to the polls.

Yet if Hague's ghost, or Boss Tweed's, took a look at a recent newspaper, he'd smile in recognition. Wholesale vote fraud is on the rise again, almost all of it trying to elect Democratic candidates. The reason that the cheating is happening overwhelmingly among the Dems these days may have something to do with who supports the respective parties, say Larry Sabato and Glenn Simpson in their book *Dirty Little Secrets*. Republican voters tend to be middle class and not easily tempted to commit fraud, while "the pool of people who appear to be available and more vulnerable to an invitation to participate in vote fraud tend to lean Democratic." Most incidents of wide-scale fraud, agrees Paul Harrison, director of the Center for American Politics at the University of Maryland, "reportedly occur in inner cities."

Barely a day has gone by in the run-up to the 2004 election without another outrageous story hitting the headlines. In Lansing, Michigan,

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the city clerk's office complained in late September about 5,000 to 8,000 fraudulent voter-registration forms that had recently come in—courtesy, election officials believed, of the Public Interest Research Group, a liberal advocacy outfit. In Racine, Wisconsin, around the same time, election officials discovered that Project Vote, another left-wing advocacy group, had filed scores of applications with phony addresses and other questionable items. The acting city clerk asked the district attorney's office to pursue possible criminal charges. Ohio, Nevada, Iowa—similar stories abounded in states across the country.

Why is such activity proliferating? It flows from the success of Democratic lawmakers in pushing aside clear, orderly, and rigorous voting procedures in favor of elastic and "inclusive" election rules that invite manipulation. A machine for corruption is the 1993 "Motor Voter Act," the first bill that President Clinton signed. The law requires government officials to allow anyone who renews a driver's license or applies for welfare or unemployment to register to vote on the spot, without showing ID or proof of citizenship. It also allows ID-free registration by mail. The law also makes it hard to purge voting lists of those who've died or moved. All this makes vote fraud a cinch, almost as easy as when Tammany Hall handed out pre-marked ballots.

Among the many abuses it has spawned, the Motor Voter law seems to have enabled illegal aliens to vote—for Democrats, evidence suggests. A 1996 INS investigation into alleged Motor Voter fraud in California's 46th congressional district discovered that "4,023 illegal voters possibly cast ballots in the disputed election between Republican Robert Dornan and Democrat Loretta Sanchez." Dornan lost by fewer than 1,000 votes. In 2002, Dean Gardner, a losing GOP candidate for California's state legislature, sent out a survey to 14,000 first-time voters. A total of 1,691 surveys came back. The results were startling: 76 people admitted that they weren't citizens but had voted, while 49 claimed not to have registered at their correct residence, as the law requires. Gardner lost by only 266 votes.

In the 2000 election, as the Missouri secretary of state later discovered, 56,000 St. Louis–area voters held multiple voter registrations. No one knows how much actual fraud took place, but it may have played a role in the Democratic defeats of incumbent Republican senator John Ashcroft, who lost his seat by 49,000 votes, and gubernatorial candidate Jim Talent, who lost by 21,000 votes.

All these stories of potential electoral abuses, Democrats retort, pale beside the Republican shenanigans that helped deliver Florida to George W. Bush in 2000. Media recounts that showed that Bush would have won Florida under any reasonable recount standard are beside the point, they say. Election officials wrongly identified thousands of people as felons, most of them minorities, thus preventing them from voting under the state's election laws. If those votes had counted, Democrats charge, Al Gore would be president today.

But both the *Miami Herald* and the *Palm Beach Post* found that, if anything, election officials were too permissive in whom they allowed to cast ballots. A *Post* analysis discovered that 5,600 people voted whose names matched those of convicted felons. "These illegal voters almost certainly influenced the down-to-the-wire presidential election," the *Post* reported. "Of the likely felons identified by the *Post*, 68 percent were registered Democrats."

Democrats think that the ambiguity in election laws will work to their benefit this fall, allowing them to litigate every single close race. Unfortunately, if "anything goes" continue to be the ballot bywords, the nation may soon wake up to a crisis even bigger than the 2000 Florida nightmare. Perhaps then the public will demand to know who subverted the election laws. But wouldn't it be better if we did something about the problem now—even if it's as simple as requiring everyone who votes to show an ID? In 2004, we should be well past the days of Boss Tweed. ■

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Sondheim vs. Sondheim

Stefan Kanfer

Only a handful of major Broadway composers have written lyrics to accompany their own melodies: Irving Berlin, Noel Coward, Jerry Herman, Cole Porter, and Stephen Sondheim. Of that extraordinary group, Sondheim enjoys the highest critical status. He has earned clutches of Tonys, a Grammy, an Oscar, the Kennedy Center and British Olivier Awards, and a Pulitzer Prize. Doctoral students study his compositions; he is a favorite of newspaper theater sections here and abroad; a quarterly magazine, *The Sondheim Review*, prints nothing but examinations of, and interviews with, the Master; and every year or so there is either a new Sondheim show or a revival of one of his past works. And still the writer ruefully observes, "I've never been popular."

That's not bogus self-deprecation. Sondheim's latest musical, *Assassins*, opened this spring to admiring reviews—and slammed shut after two months. A string of other Sondheim shows have had early closures and unprofitable runs, among them *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), *Follies* (1971), *Pacific Overtures* (1976), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), and *Passion* (1994).

Sondheim's history of flops has been one of Broadway's greatest conundrums for almost half a century: Why should an artist who inspires such intense devotion be so resistible to so many theatergoers? Is it because he crams his lyrics with complex rhyme schemes and unexpected feints and thrusts—as in the aging beauty's lament in *A Little Night Music*?:

What was once a rare
champagne
Is now just an amiable hock,
What once was a villa at least
Is "digs."
What once was a gown with
train
Is now just a simple little frock,
What once was a sumptuous
feast
Is figs.
No, no, not even figs—raisins.
Ah, liaisons!

But "Liaisons" is only one aspect of Sondheim's work. He can also write simple gags with the rhythm of a metronome, as in the tyrant's braggadocio for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*:

I, in war the most admired,
In wit the most inspired,
In love the most desired,
In dress the best displayed,
I am a parade!

Have theatergoers stayed away because Sondheim's melodies can be as elusive as anything Leonard Bernstein ever wrote? Yet he can also compose tunes that a stone could hum: "Send in the Clowns," for example, a melody heard in elevators and restaurants around the world.

It's not an on-again-off-again talent that explains Sondheim's strange duality. Instead, the evidence suggests that there are two Sondheims, a mainstream artist and a contrarian, with a willfully perverse wish *not* to appeal to the general public. That second Sondheim has been in the ascendant for many years.

Starting with *West Side Story*, his Broadway debut as a wordsmith (Bernstein wrote the music), Sondheim displayed a gift for seizing an idea and giving it wings. Take the number "Gee, Officer Krupke." Before anyone had coined the term "political correctness," at a time when the idea of "root causes" only applied to diseased agriculture, a group of young malefactors mocked the juvenile courts that they blatantly abused:

Dear kindly Judge, your Honor
My parents treat me rough,
With all the marijuana,
They won't give me a puff.
They didn't wanna have me,
But somehow I was had.
Leapin' lizards, that's why I'm
so bad!

My father beats my mommy,
My mommy clobbers me.
My grandpa's always plastered,
My grandma pushes tea,
My sister wears a mustache,
My brother wears a dress,
Goodness gracious, that's why
I'm a mess!

Dear kindly social worker,
They say go earn a buck,
Like be a soda jerker,
Which means like be a shmuck.

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It's not I'm anti-social,
I'm only anti-work,
Gloriosky, that's why I'm a jerk!

This number, deriding the fakery of the street-smart wise guys and exposing the emerging social-work and psychiatric no-fault orthodoxy, was remarkably prescient. Bernstein, who later personified radical chic in his support of the Black Panthers, would never return to the attitude of "Krupke." And Sondheim edged away from it, too, until he seemed to embrace what he once ridiculed.

The lyricist was just 27 when *West Side Story* opened to acclaim in the fall of 1957. Critics hailed Sondheim as a Broadway wunderkind. In the *Journal-American*, John McClain spoke for most of his colleagues: "Young Mr. Sondheim has gone all the way with the mood in his lyrics. His ballads are the lament of the sincere, and he can come up with the most hilarious travesty of our times—'Gee, Officer Krupke'—a plaint which should settle the problem of juvenile delinquency forever."

In 1957, Bernstein was one of America's foremost conductors and composers; director Jerome Robbins had established himself as one of the nation's most imaginative choreographers; and the book writer, Arthur Laurents, was a much produced playwright and scenarist. But who was this kid, this total unknown? Sondheim's astonishing arrival seemed a melodramatic *deus ex machina*. In fact, like most overnight discoveries, he had served a long and rigorous apprenticeship.

The only child of affluent dress manufacturer Herbert Sondheim, Stephen grew up in Manhattan until the age of ten. Then, in 1940, his parents divorced and his world went into reverse. He had to transfer from a comfortable New York school to a military academy. Home also changed, from a city apartment to a large country house in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where the boy lived with his mother, Janet Fox Sondheim, known as "Foxy."

After the split, Foxy became possessive and overbearing, casting her son as an emotional stand-in for his absent father. In Meryle Secrest's biography *Stephen Sondheim: A Life*, the subject speaks about his mother in the years following the divorce: "She would hold my hand in theaters. . . . I remember going to a play with her and she not only held my hand, but looked at me during the entire play. It was really upsetting." Then he became aware that she was trying to seduce him. "Well, she would sit across from me with her legs aspread. She would lower her blouse and that sort of stuff. . . . When my father left her, she substituted me for him. And she used me the way she had used him, to come on to and to berate, beat up on, you see. What she did for five years was treat me like dirt, but come on to me at the same time."

Thus began a strange, sorry-grateful relationship that would play out over a conflicted adolescence and young manhood. On the one hand, Stephen found himself severely discomfited by his mother's possessive and celebrity-collecting life-style. References to Foxy appeared in many a Sondheim song over the years, none more acrimonious than "The Ladies Who Lunch," describing wealthy women of a certain age:

Here's to the ladies who lunch—
Everybody laugh.
Lounging in their caftans
And planning a brunch
On their own behalf.
Off to the gym,
Then to a fitting,
Claiming they're fat.
And looking grim,
'Cause they've been sitting,
Choosing a hat.

Here's to the girls on the go—
Everybody tries.
Look into their eyes,
And you'll see what they know:
Everybody dies.
A toast to that invincible bunch,
The dinosaurs surviving the crunch.
Let's hear it for the ladies who lunch—
Everybody rise!

Yet he owed a great deal to one member of his mother's bunch—Oscar Hammerstein II. Her Bucks County neighbor provided the most important creative influence in Stephen's career. In early adolescence, Sondheim befriended Oscar's son, Jimmy, and began hang-

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Stephen Sondheim works on a score in his Turtle Bay townhouse in 1987.

ing around the Hammerstein house. When the Broadway pro learned that his young visitor wanted to write musicals, he offered avuncular encouragement and advice.

At 15, Stephen thought he was ready for the Big Time. He composed a score for his school musical and showed it to Oscar. In *Sondheim & Co.*, biographer Craig Zadan quotes Stephen's account of that epochal meeting: "He said, 'Now you want my opinion as though I didn't really know you? Well, it's the worst thing I've ever read.'" As the youth's lower lip trembled, Oscar went on: "Now, I didn't say that it was untalented, I said it was terrible. And if you want to know why it was terrible, I'll tell you."

Hammerstein proceeded to rip apart every detail, from stage directions to rhymes. Recalled Sondheim, "At the risk of hyperbole, I'd say in that afternoon I learned more about songwriting and the musical

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Urbanities

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theater than most people learn in a lifetime." Never did the man talk down to the boy. Slowly, deliberately, Oscar spoke of structure and the value of each word; how essential simplicity was; how to introduce character; the interrelationship of music and rhyme. "He was at least as good a critic as he was a writer. Most people think of Oscar as a kind of affable, idealistic lunkhead. Instead, he was a very sophisticated, sharp-tongued, articulate man," Sondheim noted.

Over the next few years, Hammerstein encouraged and instructed as Sondheim worked on various experiments, from a musical adaptation of the old George S. Kaufman–Marc Connelly comedy *Beggar on Horseback* to an adaptation of a serious play, Maxwell Anderson's *High Tor*. None reached the public, but all were stepping-stones to Broadway.

At Williams College, Sondheim majored in music and worked on the score for an original musical called *Saturday Night*. Upon graduation, he won a two-year fellowship to study with avant-garde composer Milton Babbitt in New York. Babbitt remembered him well: "No one could have been more serious about his music than Steve. . . . He wanted his music to be as sophisticated and as knowing within the obvious restraints of a

PHOTOFEST

Zero Mostel (far left) stars in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

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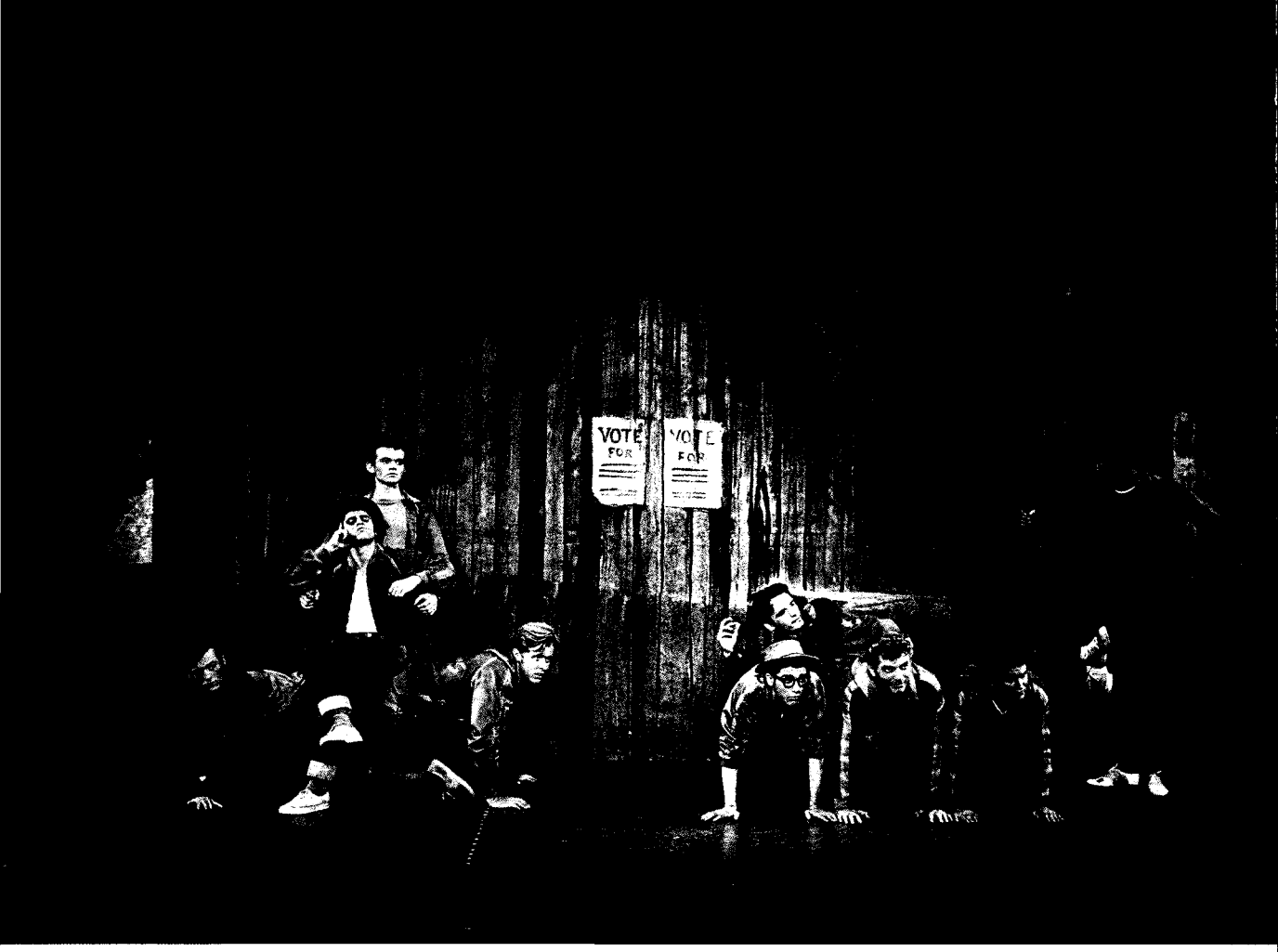

Sondheim never matched the clarity of "Gee, Officer Krupke" from his first great success, *West Side Story*.

Broadway musical." Despite grandiose plans, *Saturday Night* proved another dead-end exercise. But the songs made ideal audition numbers for prospective backers. Sondheim's name soon got around at showbiz parties. To the cognoscenti, he became known as the best unknown songwriter in town.

That label wasn't to last much longer. Sondheim's work drew Bernstein's attention. The great musician wanted the young man to co-write *West Side Story*'s lyrics. Working with a big name enticed Sondheim, but he held back. He considered himself primarily a musician, and he hated to share credit with anyone—even Lenny. What's more, he thought that the material was beyond his experience. "I can't do this show," he told his agent. "I've never been that poor, and I've never even *known* a Puerto Rican!" Advised that this was a story of star-crossed lovers, not a sociological treatise, he sighed like a prisoner and wrote like an angel. The rewards were a little fame, a lot of money, and his first movie sale.

Sondheim intended to make his next Broadway work a solo job, but it wasn't to be. An opportunity came up to work with Jule Styne on the *ur*–show business musical, *Gypsy*, and Sondheim grabbed it. Styne's brash melodies established the theme, and Sondheim amplified it with the bright cascading rhymes and assonances that would become his signature:

Whenever I go I know he goes.
Whenever I go I know she goes.
No fits, no fights, no feuds and no egos,
Amigos,
Together!

Gypsy starred Ethel Merman as the adrenal mother of stripper Gypsy Rose Lee and her sister, June Havoc. She was precisely the kind of woman Sondheim knew in his bones. He caught her psyche in the classic "Some People":

Some people sit on their butts;
Got the dream, yeah, but not the guts.
That's living for some people,

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For some hum-drum people I suppose.
Well, they can stay and rot!
But not Rose!

Gypsy was another smash, annihilating any fears of a sophomore jinx and propelling Sondheim to his primary goal: writing words and music for a major musical comedy. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* was the writer's true proving ground. For even with the explosively comic Zero Mostel, the Roman farce bombed out of town; no one in the audience seemed to know what the show was about. Over a weekend in Washington, D.C., Sondheim crafted a new opener, the chorale "Comedy Tonight." It provided a billboard for all that was to follow:

Pantaloons and tunics!
Courtesans and eunuchs!
Funerals and chases!
Baritones and basses!
Panderers! Philanderers!
Cupidity! Timidity!
Fakes! Mistakes!
Rhymes! Mimes!
Tumblers! Fumblers! Grumblers! Mumblers!
No royal curse, no Trojan horse,
And a happy ending, of course!
Goodness and badness,
Man in his madness,
This time it all turns out all right.
Tragedy tomorrow! Comedy tonight!

The song, letting the audience know that they were about to see a knockdown farce set to music, turned fortunes around. *Forum* opened at the Alvin Theater in May 1968 and ran for 964 performances—a longer Broadway run than *West Side Story*, than *Gypsy*, than any subsequent Sondheim show.

Now that it was clear that Sondheim was no fluke, he began to generate his own productions. This was no downhill slalom. The second time out on his own, Sondheim came up with *Anyone Can Whistle*, starring Angela Lansbury. A few songs had distinction, but Arthur Laurents's staging was so chaotic and campy that audiences began walking out during the first act. Nine performances later, it closed.

Elements of the show clung to the memories of everyone who worked on it. Sondheim, then in the middle of intensive psychoanalysis, was coming to grips not only with his long-suppressed homosexuality but also with his hatred of emotional intimacy. Tony Walton, who designed the sets and costumes, recalled the composer singing the title number, the lament of a woman yearning to express her deepest emotions:

What's hard is simple,
What's natural comes hard.
Maybe you could show me
How to let go,
Lower my guard,
Learn to be—
Free.
Maybe if you whistle,
Whistle for me.

Sondheim's rendition "seemed so autobiographical," Walton observed. "It made me think of Noel Coward on his seventieth birthday, singing, 'All I've had is a talent to amuse.' " Arthur Laurents agreed: "I always thought that song would be Steve's epitaph."

After the closing, Sondheim unwisely decided to collaborate once more—this time with Broadway giant Richard Rodgers, whose partner, Oscar Hammerstein II, had recently died. Sondheim was wary, but he remembered saying to himself, "Okay, I'm doing my little obligation to Oscar, I'm going to make a lot of money, and it's an easy job."

Wrong on all counts. Hammerstein would probably have disdained to adapt Laurents's arch drama, *The Time of the Cuckoo*, about a loveless spinster in Rome. The show, never compelling to audiences, didn't have a hit in it and barely broke even. And working with Rodgers was a horror. The composer drank heavily and at one time bawled out his young collaborator in front of the whole company. Sondheim furiously exited, but was talked into making peace with his collaborator. Sondheim said little at the time, though later he claimed that the show "deserved to fail." Rodgers would describe Sondheim as someone whom he watched "grow from an attractive little boy to a monster."

Up until now, Sondheim had worked within established traditions; *Company* changed all that. The composer had all-new partners: Harold Prince as

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producer, Michael Bennett as director, George Furth as book writer. The musical broke with tradition: there was no chorus and precious little plot. There was also a rare and daring sophistication. *Company* debuted during the Age of Aquarius, when cutting-edge Broadway fare emphasized nudity and single entendres. At a time when shows like *Oh! Calcutta!* and *Hair* were getting all the ink, *Company* went its own singular and intellectually demanding way. It centered on Bobby, a 35-year-old male coquette still wondering about commitment, and several married couples of his acquaintance. The show featured some brilliant patter songs, some melodies that suggested Ravel at his most inventive, and a couple of ballads about wedded life written by an outsider looking in—among them "Sorry-Grateful":

You don't live for her,
You do live with her,
You're scared she's starting to drift away,
And scared she'll stay.

Good things get better,
Bad things get worse.
Wait, I think I meant that in reverse.

And a bride's charmingly terrified monologue to the assembled witnesses, "Getting Married Today" became an instant classic:

Go, can't you go?
Look, you know
I adore you all,
But why watch me die
Like Eliza on the ice?
Look, perhaps
I'll collapse
In the apse
Right before you all
So take back the cake
Burn the shoes and boil the rice . . .
Let us pray,
That I'm not
Getting married today!

Company's undertone, though, was decidedly anti-marriage, and one number, "Little Things You Do Together," sung by a couple, contained a cringe-making element of autobiography:

It's the little things you share together,
Swear together,
Wear together,
That make perfect relationships.
The concerts you enjoy together,
Neighbors you annoy together,
Children you destroy together,
That keep marriage intact.

The out-of-town tryout in Boston earned scattered commendations, and one heavy brickbat from *Variety*: Sondheim's songs proved "undistinguished"; furthermore, it was "evident that the author, George Furth, hates femmes and makes them all out to be conniving, cunning, cantankerous, and cute. . . . As it stands now, it's for ladies' matinees, homos, and misogynists." The New York critics were kinder and wiser; *Time* and *Newsweek* hailed *Company* as a "landmark" and "so brilliant it passes over one like a shock wave." In London, reviewers set the tone that was to greet almost every subsequent Sondheim work. The *Sunday Times* was typical: "There are no native composers in this city of the varied brilliance of Stephen Sondheim, who is responsible for both music and lyrics—lyrics that are sometimes sharp as an icicle, and that at others set the mind achingly dreaming of unforgotten joys and irrational sorrows."

Yet it was the *New York Times*'s influential Sunday critic, Walter Kerr, who kept his cool and made the most discerning comments. After praising the cast, the direction, and Sondheim's "sophisticated and pertinacious" work, he concluded, "Now ask me if I liked the show. I didn't like it. I admired it. . . . Personally, I'm sorry-grateful."

This sort of ambiguous tribute would follow Sondheim for most of his career. Working with Prince again, but with various book writers, the composer/lyricist turned out five shows: *Follies* (written by James Goldman), *A Little Night Music* (Hugh Wheeler), *Pacific Overtures* (John Weidman), *Sweeney Todd* (Wheeler), and *Merrily We Roll Along* (Furth). No one could accuse Sondheim of a lack of originality—or of a yen for consistency. His work acquired a new polish, and his rhymes dug deep into character and history—as in the aging soubrette's song "I'm Still Here," from *Follies*:

I've stuffed the dailies

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In his send-up of fairy tales, *Into the Woods*, Sondheim asked what "happily ever after" really means.

In my shoes,
Strummed ukuleles
Sung the blues,
Seen all my dreams disappear
But I'm here.
I've slept in shanties,
Guest of the W.P.A.,
Danced in my scanties,
Three bucks a night was the pay.
But I'm here.
I've stood on breadlines
With the best,
Watched while the headlines
Did the rest.
In the Depression, was I depressed?
Nowhere near.
I met a big financier,
And I'm here.

Follies, ingeniously telling the story of music-hall veterans by turning their lives into vaudeville numbers, was similarly admirable without being likable.

Making matters even worse, in the early 1970s, audiences for musicals weren't interested in new conceptions. They wanted "book" shows—musical plays that they could easily follow, with songs that they could hum. *Follies* lost its entire $800,000 investment, though it garnered seven Tonys and the Drama Critics Circle Award as the Best Musical of the Year.

In 1973, a group of singers offered a one-night tribute to the composer, featuring songs going back to *Saturday Night*. That event, coupled with the release of the original-cast album of *Follies*, prompted *New York Times* critic John S. Wilson to assess Sondheim's achievement. "He is, in effect, a summation and an elevation of all the lyric writing that has gone before him. To have this made clear in an evening's program of 40 songs covering 20 years is impressive. But to find this point being made with equal clarity in a single score is an indication of the creative level at which Sondheim has arrived."

Arrived" was the operative word. Sondheim had now achieved the status of cult figure, and from here on, whatever he wrote enjoyed a respectful, if not downright awed, reception from a

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growing group of enthusiasts that included reviewers, cabaret singers, and non-showbiz "civilians" who made bestsellers of the original-cast recordings of his productions.

None of this seemed to affect the writer, at once gnawed by self-doubt and consumed by ambition. The British playwright Alan Ayckbourne remembered meeting Sondheim at an Oxford restaurant to discuss a possible project. "He speaks very, very fast and very, very quietly and he tends, certainly with people he doesn't know, to stare anywhere but at the person. I talk very, very fast and very, very quietly and don't stare at people either. So there were two guys—one of us could have left the table and the other would never have known it." Conversely, Elaine Stritch, one of Sondheim's favorite performers, stated, "He really lets you have it. He's terrible when you're not with it, but when you get it right he is so overjoyed by the material being interpreted the way he saw it that he makes you feel like a million bucks." And more than once, Jonathan Tunick saw the composer *willing* his material to thrive, "standing at the back of the house during a run-through or a tech rehearsal, his face bathed in tears."

To provide a little comic relief, Sondheim took time off in 1972 to write a mystery movie, *The Last of Sheila*, collaborating with actor Anthony Perkins. "Not having to write lyrics," said Stephen later, "made it like a vacation." This vigorous but rather nasty send-up of Agatha Christie, starring James Mason and Raquel Welch, displayed a few glints of wit but was "boy's work, not man's work," and he soon buckled down to write his next show.

A Little Night Music marked the return of the mainstream Sondheim. Laurents's book was a slyly commercial adaptation of *Smiles of a Summer Night*, Ingmar Bergman's peek at drawing-room and bedroom shenanigans in nineteenth-century Sweden. As a tribute to the epoch and the subject matter, Sondheim began thinking in terms of "fughettos, canons, contrapuntal duets, trios" and eventually composed every number in three-four time. The best of the waltzes, "Send in the Clowns," is the only Sondheim song to have reached the status of a platinum megahit, recorded by the likes of Sarah Vaughan, Frank Sinatra, and Judy Collins. Over 30 years later, the bittersweet words still resound in the cabarets of Europe and America:

Just when I stopped opening doors,
Finally finding the one that I wanted was yours,
Making my entrance again with my usual flair
Sure of my lines—nobody's there.

Don't you love farce? My fault, I fear
I thought you'd want what I want—sorry, my dear.
But where are the clowns—send in the clowns—
Don't bother . . . they're here.

In 1976, though, the contrarian Sondheim surfaced once more. *Pacific Overtures* told the story of nineteenth-century Japan's collision with Western influence. It was intellectually provocative and emotionally parched (193 performances; a loss of its entire $650,000 investment). *Sweeney Todd*, a tongue-in-cheek thriller about the partnership of an nineteenth-century London pie maker and a killer whose victims wind up in her creations, enjoyed a better reception. The opening number set the tone:

Attend the tale of Sweeney Todd
His skin was pale, and his eye was odd.
He shaved the faces of gentlemen
Who never thereafter were heard of again.
He trod a path that few had trod,
Did Sweeney Todd,
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

He kept a shop in London Town,
Of fancy clients and good renown.
And what if none of their souls were saved?
They went to their Maker impeccably shaved
By Sweeney, by Sweeney Todd
The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

Sweeney, with every piece of dialogue set to music, won eight Tonys, including Best

***Assassins* got killed at the box office.**

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PHOTOFEST

More an opera than a musical, the tongue-in-cheek spoof *Sweeney Todd* is almost entirely sung.

Score, Best Book, Best Direction, and Best Musical. On opening night, drama critic Harold Clurman challenged Schuyler Chapin, the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera: "Why didn't you put this on at the Met?" Replied Chapin, "I would have put it on like a shot, if I'd had the opportunity." He added, "And I would have. There would have been screams and yells and I wouldn't have given a damn. Because it is an opera. A modern American opera." Bearing out Chapin's claim, revivals of *Sweeney Todd* later emphasized its Verdiesque qualities, particularly those performances at the New York City Opera and the Royal National Theatre in London.

Again the profits failed to arrive; the show only earned back 59 percent of its investment. But by now, there was no shortage of producers willing to get involved with anything that the composer chose to write. Sondheim had become synonymous with glamour; prestige belonged to anything with his name on it. Revivals began to open in regional theaters across the U.S. and Britain, and if the royalties from these productions were small, they eventually mounted up to over $1 million a year for their creator, and more for those who had expressed financial faith in his efforts.

And then came *Merrily We Roll Along*. Preceding it was a minor heart attack that did little to slow Sondheim down. He quickly went to work on what seemed a standard Broadway adaptation of the Moss Hart–George S. Kaufman play. In this tragicomedy, lives and careers take place backward, starting with the corruption of success and winding up at an innocent high school graduation. The 1981 musical lasted just 16 performances, triggering a breakup with Prince, who had produced and/or directed five consecutive Sondheim works.

For months, the dejected writer holed up in his Turtle Bay townhouse, working on crossword puzzles and playing the board games that had always intrigued him—anything to take his mind away from public failure. "I am serious," he commented lugubriously, "but I'm serious in an art that is hardly worth being called one. There's a case to be made for 'Am I wasting my time in the long run?'" A friend recalled, "Steve was in a very dark place in his head and in his life. . . . It was bleak."

Sondheim's personal situation didn't improve his mood. He had friends in the entertainment business, but he lived alone; he had gone solo since college. Theater people knew he was gay; they also knew he was extremely private, and

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kept their distance. What only a few knew was how much Foxy still pervaded his life. A few years before, she had entered the hospital to have a pacemaker installed. The night before the operation, she had a letter hand-delivered to her son, "because," said Stephen, "she thought she was going to die and wanted to make sure I got it." The note's bottom line: "The only regret I have in life is giving you birth."

Recalled Sondheim, "As quickly as my hand could cross the paper I wrote her a three-page reply. Everything I'd felt, that I'd never expressed up to this point. It wasn't hard. I just said, 'I don't want to see you any more. I'll continue to support you, and just call my business manager'; that was all."

That catharsis could not heal the childhood wounds. Sondheim wouldn't permit himself to fall in love with anyone. If the relationship didn't work out, the pain would be unbearable; look at what the theater had just done to him. He told people that he was thinking about forsaking composition altogether, that perhaps he'd try to write mystery novels. But this would have been like Canute commanding the tide to reverse itself, and he knew it.

In 1984, Sondheim tentatively edged back into the creative mind-set, working with dramatist James Lapine, making certain to avoid the mainstream in every respect—musically, lyrically, conceptually. He wanted to do something totally different this time—not only from what others might offer but also from anything he had written before. He intended to push and prod the audience, even against its will, to recognize the American musical as an art form as valid as opera or jazz.

And, in fact, when *Sunday in the Park with George* debuted at the Booth Theater in 1985, critics could find no basis of comparison with any other musical, for the show had taken on nothing less than the act of creation. Its subject: the pointillist painter Georges Seurat and his effort to create a fresh way of looking at the physical world. Though *Sunday* had a romantic air, and Tony Straiges's remarkable sets evoked *fin-de-siècle* Paris, even the love songs addressed the compensations and demands of art, as in "Finishing the Hat":

And when the woman that you wanted goes,
You can say to yourself, "Well, I give what I give!"
But the woman who won't wait for you knows
That however you live
There's a part of you always standing by,
Mapping out the sky,
Finishing the hat.
Starting on a hat.
Look, I made a hat—
Where there never was a hat!

To give his new work the verbal equivalent of pointillist painting, Sondheim repeated certain small phrases—"color and light," "move on," "bring order to the whole." Musically, he used three or four short notes followed by upward-reaching intervals, usually minor thirds or fourths. In the *Times*, John Rockwell delved into the melodic structure: "His use of these little building blocks hardly precludes soaring lyricism, however, especially with the warmly orchestrated sustaining lines to counterpoint the pointillism. At its best, this method recalls the lyrical climaxes in the operas of Leoš Janáček, which are similarly built up from interlocking motifs, repeated over and over in a climactic upward curve."

Reviewers and feature writers tended to be respectful rather than ecstatic, but their enthusiasm picked up considerably when *Sunday* won the Pulitzer Prize—only the sixth musical to win the award. The Pulitzer committee may well have had in mind Frank Rich's shrewd comment in the *Times*: "This protagonist is possibly a double for Mr. Sondheim at his most self-doubting . . . . In keeping with his setting, Mr. Sondheim has written a lovely, wildly inventive score that sometimes remakes the modern French composers whose revolution in music paralleled the post-impressionists' in art."

That *Sunday in the Park with George* failed to earn back its investment counted for nothing; Sondheim's confidence was back, and that was all that mattered to the theatrical community—and to the

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backers, who had learned to wait for their payoff. A burst of energy followed, along with some competitive sniping at the lyricists who had preceded him. He judged Ira Gershwin "self-conscious." Irving Berlin told jokes very well in his songs, but "I don't think he has ever touched me. I admire him more than I love him." Lorenz Hart had "sloppy" technique and kept writing "the same song over and over again." Some time later, Berlin rose to defend his old colleague: "Stephen Sondheim, a very successful lyric writer, came out of left field with an unkindly, an unjust interview about Larry Hart as a lyric writer. All I can say is that Larry Hart's lyrics have lasted so many years. . . . Larry Hart was not only a lyric writer but a word writer. He had a fine education and could use four- and five- and six- and seven-letter words, and still get down to writing 'With a Song in My Heart.' I mean, he could be very simple. And very moving, when a lot of others can't be."

In mitigation, no one was harder on Sondheim than Sondheim. Weighing some of his work in *West Side Story*, for example, he disparaged the internal rhymes for "I Feel Pretty" ("It's alarming how charming I feel") as too mannered for the uneducated Maria. And he was especially critical of "America": "I had this wonderful quatrain that went,

I like to be in America,
OK by me in America.
Everything free in America,
For a small fee in America.

"The 'For a small fee' was my little zinger—except that the 'for' is accented and 'small fee' is impossible to say that fast, so it went '*For* a smafee in America.' Nobody knew what it meant!"

There would be no such flaws in Sondheim's next production, *Into the Woods*. The musical premiered on Broadway in 1987 and became his second-greatest success. Again working with Lapine, he took inspiration from psychiatrist Bruno Bettelheim's great explication of fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment*. To Bettelheim, the woods of the tales have always "symbolized the dark, hidden, near-impenetrable world of our unconscious. . . . When we succeed in finding our way out we shall emerge with a much more highly developed humanity." Accordingly, *Into the Woods* interwove several classic fairy tales, among them Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, and Little Red Riding Hood.

Act 1 narrated the traditional story, but Act 2 was something else again: a twice-upon-a-time narrative, following the principals past the standard "happily ever after" conclusion. Cinderella finds that life in the castle isn't what she imagined; the giant's wife terrorizes a village, furiously pursuing the man who killed her husband; Prince Charming enjoys a liaison with a baker's wife in the forest. Violence ensues before everything rights itself in the finale.

When Sondheim was on his game—particularly in Act 1—he was both hilarious and charming. Confronting Little Red Riding Hood, for example, the Wolf licks his lips and sings:

Think of that scrumptious carnality
Twice in one day!
There's no possible way
To describe what you feel
When you're talking to your meal.

The trouble with the plot—and the score—was its insistence on turning everything on its ear, jeering at tradition in a grotesque and angry way. It seemed a paean to relativism, an insistence on the individual's rights, at whatever cost to the community. One of the songs, "No One Is Alone," became something of an anthem for AIDS sufferers:

Sometimes people leave you
Halfway through the wood.
Others may deceive you,
You decide what's good . . . .
People make mistakes
Fathers, mothers,
People make mistakes
Holding to their own
Thinking they're alone.
Honor their mistakes
Everybody makes
One another's terrible mistakes.
Witches can be right
Giants can be good.
You decide what's right,
You decide what's good.
Just remember . . .
Someone is on your side
No one is alone.

That song makes an interest-

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ing contrast to a similar number, "You'll Never Walk Alone," written more than half a century earlier by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II.

When you walk through a storm
hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark.
At the end of a storm is a
golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a
lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Though your dreams be tossed
and blown.
Walk on, walk on, with hope in
your heart
And you'll never walk alone;
You'll never walk alone.

The difference is one both of sincerity and authenticity. Hammerstein's lyric seems the authentic utterance of a congenital optimist who believes what he says. Sondheim's rings false, the work of someone who doesn't quite stand behind his words. The man who failed to attend his mother's funeral, for example, is hardly in a position to advise others, vis-à-vis parents, to "honor their mistakes." As for the notion that "you decide what's right, you decide what's good"—can the moral relativist who wrote that line be the same man who once showed teenage punks mocking the experts who blamed their gangbanging on their victimization by bad parents and lack of economic opportunity rather than on their own exuberantly free choice?

Nonetheless, on the strength of the sparkling score, Bernadette Peters's star turn as a witch and Joanna Gleason's as the baker's wife, and the popular (and correct) belief that *Into the Woods* was the only kind of "family show" Sondheim would ever write, the production thrived at the box office. It ran for 764 performances, received ten Tony nominations, and in a season overwhelmed by Andrew Lloyd Webber's spectacular *The Phantom of the Opera*, won in the Best Score category. Lapine won another award for Best Book, and Gleason took honors for Best Actress.

The songwriter was to go on, but this would be the best of his last hurrahs. To demonstrate that he could write "singles" as well as a score, he contributed songs to two films, *The Seven Percent Solution* and *Dick Tracy*. Madonna performed "Sooner or Later" from *Dick Tracy* with surprising felicity. The number showed that Sondheim, just like Irving Berlin, could write clean lyrics and memorable melodies when he wanted to:

Sooner or later you're gonna
decide
Sooner or later there's nowhere
to hide
Baby, it's time, so why waste it
in chatter?
Let's settle the matter.
Baby, you're mine on a platter,
I always get my man.

"I Never Do Anything Twice," from *The Seven Percent Solution*, in turn demonstrated an ability to out-entendre Cole Porter:

And then there was the abbot
who worshipped at my feet,
Who dressed me in a wimple
and in veils.
He made a proposition that I
found rather sweet,
And handed me a hammer and
some nails
In time we lay contented and
he began again
By fingering the beads around
our waists.
I whispered to him then, "We'll
have to say Amen,"
For I had developed more
catholic tastes.

Once, yes, once for a lark, twice,
though, loses the spark.
As I said to the abbot, "I'll get
in the habit, but not in the
habit
You've my highest regard, and I
know that it's hard.
Still no matter the vice, I never
do anything twice."

Over the last ten years, almost all of Sondheim's musicals have enjoyed revivals, either on Broadway or the West End (even a 40-minute sketch, *The Frogs*, wound up as a lively two-hour off-Broadway farce.) Yet the composer refused to satisfy himself with sights in his rearview mirror. For the 1994 musical *Passion*, an adaptation of an obscure Italian film, he again tried something completely new. Weary of operatic, showstopping moments that brought the action to a halt, he crafted his songs to begin and end in dialogue, with no opportunities

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for applause. To his dismay, it turned out that audiences *wanted* the show to stop after big arias by the lead, Donna Murphy. Denied the opportunity, they grew restive. Word of mouth was extremely negative, and the show closed before the season was out.

Sondheim licked his wounds and pressed on. The recent *Assassins* sought to send up the American "can-do" spirit. Staged like a carnival, it put such presidential killers as John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald up against wannabes like Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme and Sarah Jane Moore, the two women who tried to slay Gerald Ford. The nineteenth-century assassins exchanged thoughts with their twentieth-century counterparts, with everyone egging everyone else on between songs. The numbers represented Sondheim at his most perverse: vinegary music and a series of cynical internal rhymes:

No job? Cupboard bare?
One room, no one there?
Hey, pal, don't despair;
You wanna shoot a president?

The style was reminiscent of Gore Vidal doing American history in full bitch-revisionist mode (George Washington as a bumbling, pear-shaped soldier, Thomas Jefferson a double-dealing hypocrite, and the like). *Assassins*, workshopped and polished for ten years, did have moments of intensity and some

MARTHA SWOPE

***Sunday in the Park with George* explored artistic angst.**

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Urbanities

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weirdly comic interludes, as when the drugged-out Fromme defends her demented hero Charles Manson: Charley may not be much to look at, but "at least he's the son of God." Alas, like so many Sondheim efforts, the show was cold and unlikable. In the end, the theater piece was one more instance of ironic postmodernism separating itself from emotion and paying the box-office price.

When Meryle Secrest's Sondheim biography appeared, it came as no surprise to learn that the composer was 61 before he let anyone move in with him. (He lived with the composer Peter Jones for several years, but they broke up.) After all, Sondheim characterized himself as "the boy in the bubble," and he has remained that enclosed child for 70-plus years. More than once, he has stated that he "never grew up," and that self-appraisal seems to contain more candor than caricature.

Unfortunately, however high his standards of prosody and musical composition, he has relaxed his standards about the stuff he chooses to ornament. Lately, he seems to have *no* standards at all, save those of proper meter and melody, and he has lost himself in a cul-de-sac: what he writes is increasingly bright, superficial, pseudo-perceptive, a glistening maze with no exit. Last season, a satire called *Musical of Musicals, The Musical*, opened off-Broadway. Its creators, Joanne Bogart and Eric Rockwell, mocked the composer's intricate style:

I'm weary. Be wary of the weary. Don't worry if it's scary.
But wary isn't eerie. Be leery of the wary.
Are you with me? Stay with me.
This is all too deep. I'm falling asleep.
When you have to strain to ex plain the arcane
It's bound to sound profound.

An unkind portrait of a conflicted genius perhaps, but not inaccurate. Today Sondheim is working on another musical with John Weidman. *Wise Guys* intends to present the double biographies of two once-famous brothers, Addison and Wilson Mizner, one gay, one straight. In the composer's view, the siblings represent "two divergent aspects of American energy, the builder and the squanderer, the visionary and the promoter, the conformist and the maverick, the idealist planner and the restless cynic, the one who uses things and the one who uses them up." Sondheim remarks that *Wise Guys* is "about to set a record" for gestation. It has been almost 50 years since he first came across their story and started to turn it into a musical. "Bizarre as it may seem, I believe the delay has been good for it."

Only a full-scale production will tell. But even if it never sees the klieg lights, people will be arguing about the two Sondheims for generations to come, thanks in large part to the press. The disconnect between the adoring critics and the critical ticket holders began decades ago and has only widened since. Even as the general public turned away, reviewers and academics, sick of the pop pap that has become a large part of Broadway fare, have either celebrated or overlooked the composer's lack of melody and the lyricist's absence of warmth. Something astringent tends to clear their heads. The critics also like to nourish the illusion that they are guiding public taste, leading it to undreamed-of modernist heights. Sondheim has responded by giving them ingenious and elaborate coterie compositions, growing more obscure and off-putting as the years advance.

Yet though Sondheim has won greater academic honors than Rodgers, Berlin, Hart, the Gershwins, and other front-rank showmen, he has paid a price for his critical renown. Save for a handful of numbers, it is unlikely that 50 years from now popular entertainers will sing his songs and that the general public—those uncelebrated people who finally determine which Broadway and Tin Pan Alley figures enter the pantheon—will cherish them. Such eminence was well within Sondheim's reach, but he didn't take that road. He had better things to do. For better or worse, he still does. At 74, the boy in the bubble can't be bothered with popularity. He's too busy making a hat. ■

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Oh, to

ngland

The Frivolity of Evil

Theodore Dalrymple

When prisoners are released from prison, they often say that they have paid their debt to society. This is absurd, of course: crime is not a matter of double-entry bookkeeping. You cannot pay a debt by having caused even greater expense, nor can you pay in advance for a bank robbery by offering to serve a prison sentence before you commit it. Perhaps, metaphorically speaking, the slate is wiped clean once a prisoner is released from prison, but the debt is not paid off.

It would be just as absurd for me to say, on my imminent retirement after 14 years of my hospital and prison work, that I have paid my debt to society. I had the choice to do something more pleasing if I had wished, and I was paid, if not munificently, at least adequately. I chose the disagreeable neighborhood in which I practiced because, medically speaking, the poor are more interesting, at least to me, than the rich: their pathology is more florid, their need for attention greater. Their dilemmas, if cruder, seem to me more compelling, nearer to the fundamentals of human existence. No doubt I also felt my services would be more valuable there: in other words, that I had some kind of duty to perform. Perhaps for that reason, like the prisoner on his release, I feel I have paid my debt to society. Certainly, the work has taken a toll on me, and it is time to do something else. Someone else can do battle with the metastasizing social pathology of Great Britain, while I lead a life aesthetically more pleasing to me.

My work has caused me to become perhaps unhealthily preoccupied with the problem of evil. Why do people commit evil? What conditions allow it to flourish? How is it best prevented and, when necessary, suppressed? Each time I listen to a patient recounting the cruelty to which he or she has been subjected, or has committed (and I have listened to several such patients every day for 14 years), these questions revolve endlessly in my mind.

No doubt my previous experiences fostered my preoccupation with this problem. My mother was a refugee from Nazi Germany, and though she spoke very little of her life before she came to Britain, the mere fact that there was much of which she did not speak gave evil a ghostly presence in our household.

Later, I spent several years touring the world, often in places where atrocity had recently been, or still was being, committed. In Central America, I witnessed civil war fought between guerrilla groups intent on imposing totalitarian tyranny on their societies, opposed by armies that didn't scruple to resort to massacre. In Equatorial Guinea, the current dictator was the nephew and henchman of the last dictator, who had killed or driven into exile a third of the population, executing every last person who wore glasses or possessed a page of printed matter for being a disaffected or potentially disaffected intellectual. In Liberia, I visited a church in which more than 600 people had taken refuge and been slaughtered, possibly by the president himself (soon to be videotaped being tortured to death). The outlines of the bodies were still visible on the dried blood on the floor, and the long mound of the mass grave began only a few yards from the entrance. In North Korea I saw the acme of tyranny, millions of people in terrorized, abject obeisance to a personality cult whose object, the Great Leader Kim Il Sung, made the Sun King look like the personification of modesty.

Still, all these were political evils, which my own country had entirely escaped. I optimistically supposed that, in the absence of the worst political deformations, widespread evil was impossible. I soon discovered my error. Of course, nothing that I was to see in a British slum approached the scale or depth of what I had witnessed elsewhere. Beating a woman from motives of jealousy, locking her in a closet, breaking her arms deliberately, terrible though it may be, is not the same, by a long way, as mass murder. More than enough of the constitutional, traditional, institutional, and social

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restraints on large-scale political evil still existed in Britain to prevent anything like what I had witnessed elsewhere.

Yet the scale of a man's evil is not entirely to be measured by its practical consequences. Men commit evil within the scope available to them. Some evil geniuses, of course, devote their lives to increasing that scope as widely as possible, but no such character has yet arisen in Britain, and most evildoers merely make the most of their opportunities. They do what they can get away with.

In any case, the extent of the evil that I found, though far more modest than the disasters of modern history, is nonetheless impressive. From the vantage point of one six-bedded hospital ward, I have met at least 5,000 perpetrators of the kind of violence I have just described and 5,000 victims of it: nearly 1 percent of the population of my city—or a higher percentage, if one considers the age-specificity of the behavior. And when you take the life histories of these people, as I have, you soon realize that their existence is as saturated with arbitrary violence as that of the inhabitants of many a dictatorship. Instead of one dictator, though, there are thousands, each the absolute ruler of his own little sphere, his power circumscribed by the proximity of another such as he.

Violent conflict, not confined to the home and hearth, spills out onto the streets. Moreover, I discovered that British cities such as my own even had torture chambers: run not by the government, as in dictatorships, but by those representatives of slum enterprise, the drug dealers. Young men and women in debt to drug dealers are kidnapped, taken to the torture chambers, tied to beds, and beaten or whipped. Of compunction there is none—only a residual fear of the consequences of going too far.

Perhaps the most alarming feature of this low-level but endemic evil, the one that brings it close to the conception of original sin, is that it is unforced and spontaneous. No one requires people to commit it. In the worst dictatorships, some of the evil ordinary men and women do they do out of fear of not committing it. There, goodness requires heroism. In the Soviet Union in the 1930s, for example, a man who failed to report a political joke to the authorities was himself guilty of an offense that could lead to deportation or death. But in modern Britain, no such conditions exist: the government does not require citizens to behave as I have described and punish them if they do not. The evil is freely chosen.

Not that the government is blameless in the matter—far from it. Intellectuals propounded the idea that man should be freed from the shackles of social convention and self-control, and the government, without any demand from below, enacted laws that promoted unrestrained behavior and created a welfare system that protected people from some of its economic consequences. When the barriers to evil are brought down, it flourishes; and never again will I be tempted to believe in the fundamental goodness of man, or that evil is something exceptional or alien to human nature.

Of course, my personal experience is just that—personal experience. Admittedly, I have looked out at the social world of my city and my country from a peculiar and possibly unrepresentative vantage point, from a prison and from a hospital ward where practically all the patients have tried to kill themselves, or at least made suicidal gestures. But it is not small or slight personal experience, and each of my thousands, even scores of thousands, of cases has given me a window into the world in which that person lives.

And when my mother asks me whether I am not in danger of letting my personal experience embitter me or cause me to look at the world through bile-colored spectacles, I ask her why she thinks that she, in common with all old people in Britain today, feels the need to be indoors by sundown or face the consequences, and why this should be the case in a country that within living memory was law-abiding and safe? Did she not herself tell me that, as a young woman during the blackouts in the Blitz, she felt perfectly safe, at least from the depredations of her fellow citizens, walking home in the

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Are these suitable fathers for the nation's children?

pitch dark, and that it never occurred to her that she might be the victim of a crime, whereas nowadays she has only to put her nose out of her door at dusk for her to think of nothing else? Is it not true that her purse has been stolen twice in the last two years, in broad daylight, and is it not true that statistics—however manipulated by governments to put the best possible gloss upon them—bear out the accuracy of the conclusions that I have drawn from my personal experience? In 1921, the year of my mother's birth, there was one crime recorded for every 370 inhabitants of England and Wales; 80 years later, it was one for every ten inhabitants. There has been a 12-fold increase since 1941 and an even greater increase in crimes of violence. So while personal experience is hardly a complete guide to social reality, the historical data certainly back up my impressions.

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Oh, to be in England

A single case can be illuminating, especially when it is statistically banal—in other words, not at all exceptional. Yesterday, for example, a 21-year-old woman consulted me, claiming to be depressed. She had swallowed an overdose of her antidepressants and then called an ambulance.

There is something to be said here about the word "depression," which has almost entirely eliminated the word and even the concept of unhappiness from modern life. Of the thousands of patients I have seen, only two or three have ever claimed to be unhappy: all the rest have said that they were depressed. This semantic shift is deeply significant, for it implies that dissatisfaction with life is itself pathological, a medical condition, which it is the responsibility of the doctor to alleviate by medical means. Everyone has a right to health; depression is unhealthy; therefore everyone has a right to be happy (the opposite of being depressed). This idea in turn implies that one's state of mind, or one's mood, is or should be independent of the way that one lives one's life, a belief that must deprive human existence of all meaning, radically disconnecting reward from conduct.

A ridiculous *pas de deux* between doctor and patient ensues: the patient pretends to be ill, and the doctor pretends to cure him. In the process, the patient is willfully blinded to the conduct that inevitably causes his misery in the first place. I have therefore come to see that one of the most important tasks of the doctor today is the disavowal of his own power and responsibility. The patient's notion that he is ill stands in the way of his understanding of the situation, without which moral change cannot take place. The doctor who pretends to treat is an obstacle to this change, blinding rather than enlightening.

My patient already had had three children by three different men, by no means unusual among my patients, or indeed in the country as a whole. The father of her first child had been violent, and she had left him; the second died in an accident while driving a stolen car; the third, with whom she had been living, had demanded that she should leave his apartment because, a week after their child was born, he decided that he no longer wished to live with her. (The discovery of incompatibility a week after the birth of a child is now so common as to be statistically normal.) She had nowhere to go, no one to fall back on, and the hospital was a temporary sanctuary from her woes. She hoped that we would fix her up with some accommodation.

She could not return to her mother, because of conflict with her "stepfather," or her mother's latest boyfriend, who, in fact, was only nine years older than she and seven years younger than her mother. This compression of the generations is also now a common pattern and is seldom a recipe for happiness. (It goes without saying that her own father had disappeared at her birth, and she had never seen him since.) The latest boyfriend in this kind of ménage either wants the daughter around to abuse her sexually or else wants her out of the house as being a nuisance and an unnecessary expense. This boyfriend wanted her out of the house, and set about creating an atmosphere certain to make her leave as soon as possible.

The father of her first child had, of course, recognized her vulnerability. A girl of 16 living on her own is easy prey. He beat her from the first, being drunken, possessive, and jealous, as well as flagrantly unfaithful. She thought that a child would make him more responsible—sober him up and calm him down. It had the reverse effect. She left him.

The father of her second child was a career criminal, already imprisoned several times. A drug addict who took whatever drugs he could get, he died under the influence. She had known all about his past before she had his child.

The father of her third child was much older than she. It was he who suggested that they have a child—in fact he demanded it as a condition of staying with her. He had five children already by three different women, none of whom he supported in any way whatever.

The conditions for the perpetuation of evil were now complete. She was a young woman who would not want

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to remain alone, without a man, for very long; but with three children already, she would attract precisely the kind of man, like the father of her first child—of whom there are now many—looking for vulnerable, exploitable women. More than likely, at least one of them (for there would undoubtedly be a succession of them) would abuse her children sexually, physically, or both.

She was, of course, a victim of her mother's behavior at a time when she had little control over her destiny. Her mother had thought that her own sexual liaison was more important than the welfare of her child, a common way of thinking in today's welfare Britain. That same day, for example, I was consulted by a young woman whose mother's consort had raped her many times between the ages of eight and 15, with her mother's full knowledge. Her mother had allowed this solely so that her relationship with her consort might continue. It could happen that my patient will one day do the same thing.

My patient was not just a victim of her mother, however: she had knowingly borne children of men of whom no good could be expected. She knew perfectly well the consequences and the meaning of what she was doing, as her reaction to something that I said to her—and say to hundreds of women patients in a similar situation—proved: next time you are thinking of going out with a man, bring him to me for my inspection, and I'll tell you if you can go out with him.

This never fails to make the most wretched, the most "depressed" of women smile broadly or laugh heartily. They know exactly what I mean, and I need not spell it out further. They know that I mean that most of the men they have chosen have their evil written all over them, sometimes quite literally in the form of tattoos, saying "FUCK OFF" or "MAD DOG." And they understand that if I can spot the evil instantly, because they know what I would look for, so can they—and therefore they are in large part responsible for their own downfall at the hands of evil men.

Moreover, they are aware that I believe that it is both foolish and wicked to have children by men without having considered even for a second or a fraction of a second whether the men have any qualities that might make them good fathers. Mistakes are possible, of course: a man may turn out not to be as expected. But not even to consider the question is to act as irresponsibly as it is possible for a human being to act. It is knowingly to increase the sum of evil in the world, and sooner or later the summation of small evils leads to the triumph of evil itself.

My patient did not start out with the intention of abetting, much less of committing, evil. And yet her refusal to take seriously and act upon the signs that she saw and the knowledge that she had was not the consequence of blindness and ignorance. It was utterly willful. She knew from her own experience, and that of many people around her, that her choices, based on the pleasure or the desire of the moment, would lead to the misery and suffering not only of herself, but—especially—of her own children.

This truly is not so much the banality as the frivolity of evil: the elevation of passing pleasure for oneself over the long-term misery of others to whom one owes a duty. What better phrase than the frivolity of evil describes the conduct of a mother who turns her own 14-year-old child out of doors because her latest boyfriend does not want him or her in the house? And what better phrase describes the attitude of those intellectuals who see in this conduct nothing but an extension of human freedom and choice, another thread in life's rich tapestry?

The men in these situations also know perfectly well the meaning and consequences of what they are doing. The same day that I saw the patient I have just described, a man aged 25 came into our ward, in need of an operation to remove foil-wrapped packets of cocaine that he had swallowed in order to evade being caught by the police in possession of them. (Had a packet burst, he would have died immediately.) As it happened, he had just left his latest girlfriend—one week after she had given birth to their child. They weren't getting along, he said; he needed

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his space. Of the child, he thought not for an instant.

I asked him whether he had any other children.

"Four," he replied.

"How many mothers?"

"Three."

"Do you see any of your children?"

He shook his head. It is supposedly the duty of the doctor not to pass judgment on how his patients have elected to live, but I think I may have raised my eyebrows slightly. At any rate, the patient caught a whiff of my disapproval.

"I know," he said. "I know. Don't tell me."

These words were a complete confession of guilt. I have had hundreds of conversations with men who have abandoned their children in this fashion, and they all know perfectly well what the consequences are for the mother and, more important, for the children. They all know that they are condemning their children to lives of brutality, poverty, abuse, and hopelessness. They tell me so themselves. And yet they do it over and over again, to such an extent that I should guess that nearly a quarter of British children are now brought up this way.

The result is a rising tide of neglect, cruelty, sadism, and joyous malignity that staggers and appalls me. I am more horrified after 14 years than the day I started.

Where does this evil come from? There is obviously something flawed in the heart of man that he should wish to behave in this depraved fashion—the legacy of original sin, to speak metaphorically. But if, not so long ago, such conduct was much less widespread than it is now (in a time of much lesser prosperity, be it remembered by those who think that poverty explains everything), then something more is needed to explain it.

A necessary, though not sufficient, condition is the welfare state, which makes it possible, and sometimes advantageous, to behave like this. Just as the IMF is the bank of last resort, encouraging commercial banks to make unwise loans to countries that they know the IMF will bail out, so the state is the parent of last resort—or, more often than not, of first resort. The state, guided by the apparently generous and humane philosophy that no child, whatever its origins, should suffer deprivation, gives assistance to any child, or rather the mother of any child, once it has come into being. In matters of public housing, it is actually advantageous for a mother to put herself at a disadvantage, to be a single mother, without support from the fathers of the children and dependent on the state for income. She is then a priority; she won't pay local taxes, rent, or utility bills.

As for the men, the state absolves them of all responsibility for their children. The state is now father to the child. The biological father is therefore free to use whatever income he has as pocket money, for entertainment and little treats. He is thereby reduced to the status of a child, though a spoiled child with the physical capabilities of a man: petulant, demanding, querulous, self-centered, and violent if he doesn't get his own way. The violence escalates and becomes a habit. A spoiled brat becomes an evil tyrant.

But if the welfare state is a necessary condition for the spread of evil, it is not sufficient. After all, the British welfare state is neither the most extensive nor the most generous in the world, and yet our rates of social pathology—public drunkenness, drug-taking, teenage pregnancy, venereal disease, hooliganism, criminality—are the highest in the world. Something more was necessary to produce this result.

Here we enter the realm of culture and ideas. For it is necessary not only to believe that it is economically feasible to behave in the irresponsible and egotistical fashion that I have described, but also to believe that it is morally permissible to do so. And this idea has been peddled by the intellectual elite in Britain for many years, more assiduously than anywhere else, to the extent that it is now taken for granted. There has been a long march not only through the institutions but through the minds of the young. When young people want to praise themselves, they describe themselves as "nonjudgmental." For them, the highest form of morality is amorality.

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There has been an unholy alliance between those on the Left, who believe that man is endowed with rights but no duties, and libertarians on the Right, who believe that consumer choice is the answer to all social questions, an idea eagerly adopted by the Left in precisely those areas where it does not apply. Thus people have a right to bring forth children any way they like, and the children, of course, have the right not to be deprived of anything, at least anything material. How men and women associate and have children is merely a matter of consumer choice, of no more moral consequence than the choice between dark and milk chocolate, and the state must not discriminate among different forms of association and child rearing, even if such non-discrimination has the same effect as British and French neutrality during the Spanish Civil War.

The consequences to the children and to society do not enter into the matter: for in any case it is the function of the state to ameliorate by redistributive taxation the material effects of individual irresponsibility, and to ameliorate the emotional, educational, and spiritual effects by an army of social workers, psychologists, educators, counselors, and the like, who have themselves come to form a powerful vested interest of dependence on the government.

So while my patients know in their hearts that what they are doing is wrong, and worse than wrong, they are encouraged nevertheless to do it by the strong belief that they have the right to do it, because everything is merely a matter of choice. Almost no one in Britain ever publicly challenges this belief. Nor has any politician the courage to demand a withdrawal of the public subsidy that allows the intensifying evil I have seen over the past 14 years—violence, rape, intimidation, cruelty, drug addiction, neglect—to flourish so exuberantly. With 40 percent of children in Britain born out of wedlock, and the proportion still rising, and with divorce the norm rather than the exception, there soon will be no electoral constituency for reversal. It is already deemed to be electoral suicide to advocate it by those who, in their hearts, know that such a reversal is necessary.

I am not sure they are right. They lack courage. My only cause for optimism during the past 14 years has been the fact that my patients, with a few exceptions, can be brought to see the truth of what I say: that they are not depressed; they are unhappy—and they are unhappy because they have chosen to live in a way that they ought not to live, and in which it is impossible to be happy. Without exception, they say that they would not want their children to live as they have lived. But the social, economic, and ideological pressures—and, above all, the parental example—make it likely that their children's choices will be as bad as theirs.

Ultimately, the moral cowardice of the intellectual and political elites is responsible for the continuing social disaster that has overtaken Britain, a disaster whose full social and economic consequences have yet to be seen. A sharp economic downturn would expose how far the policies of successive governments, all in the direction of libertinism, have atomized British society, so that all social solidarity within families and communities, so protective in times of hardship, has been destroyed. The elites cannot even acknowledge what has happened, however obvious it is, for to do so would be to admit their past responsibility for it, and that would make them feel bad. Better that millions should live in wretchedness and squalor than that they should feel bad about themselves—another aspect of the frivolity of evil. Moreover, if members of the elite acknowledged the social disaster brought about by their ideological libertinism, they might feel called upon to place restraints upon their own behavior, for you cannot long demand of others what you balk at doing yourself.

There are pleasures, no doubt, to be had in crying in the wilderness, in being a man who thinks he has seen further and more keenly than others, but they grow fewer with time. The wilderness has lost its charms for me.

I'm leaving—I hope for good. ■

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Letters

The Merits of Memorization

To the editor:

In reading Michael Knox Beran's "In Defense of Memorization" [Summer 2004], I learn not to trust my direct experience. My children have been attending a "progressive" school based, I am told, on the Bank Street philosophy. Every winter holiday season, the school's open house celebration consists of children reciting to the assembled parents, sometimes solo and sometimes in pairs. The middle schoolers memorized the Gettysburg Address.

Vicky Perry
Via e-mail

To the editor:

Great article on memorization and its enemies. A while back, in an intro to lit course for sophomores at Emory University, I ended a class with an assignment to memorize a 20-line poem and recite it in class the next day. A student in the front row blurted out, "Why?" She wasn't being impudent. She genuinely could not understand why one would ever want or need to memorize a poem. Obviously, nobody had ever asked her to do so before.

That's where we are in literary education today. One would think that, with reading scores flat despite billions in investment, with 57 percent of high school seniors scoring "below basic" on the NAEP history test, and with only one senior in 25 scoring "advanced" in civics, the progressivists would look in the mirror and admit, "We've failed." Unlikely, to be sure, but how much evidence of error is necessary, how many years of decline must pass, before the education establishment abandons Dewey/Kilpatrick/Darling-Hammond and accepts "A Nation at Risk," standards-based curricula, and content-centered pedagogy? *Mark Bauerlein*
National Endowment for the Arts

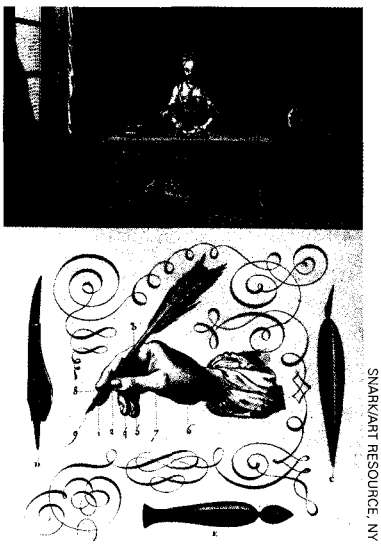
To the editor:

As a professor, I'm grateful for Michael Knox Beran's "In Defense of Memorization." Teaching foreign language and literature, one quickly discovers how useful memorization is—for enriching students' vocabulary, teaching them rhythm and intonation, and allowing them to appropriate thought and diction they—we—cannot "construct" on our own. Poems and plays only come fully to life when they are spoken, from the heart, by heart.

Christopher Maurer
Jones International University

To the editor:

Obviously, the fact that there are now plenty of ways to retrieve and keep information—the Internet, computers, public libraries, and even paper—does not strike Michael Knox Beran as a good enough reason for rote memorization to be abandoned, so he feels the need to blame a sinister cabal of "progressives." Rote memorization has its place—in the past. Today, it's more important to teach children how to find the information they need and use it creatively. *Jorge Palinhos*
Via e-mail



SNARK/ART RESOURCE, NY

To the editor:

I teach at a little-university-on-the-prairie, and I spend the first month of every semester in every freshman course undoing the damage that "creative freedom" has done to my students. I feel strongly about this, since I too was a victim.

In seventh grade, I was tracked into a "creative writing" English class—away from the drudgery of diagramming sentences. It was great fun, but I never learned a lick of English grammar. I eventually learned German, French, Greek, and Latvian grammar, but never English grammar—except for those points where it intersects with these other languages. In what universe was I "liberated" by being allowed to "write creatively" when I couldn't write in the first place?

I had teachers who killed off my love of literature and poetry. Fortunately, I had a grandmother who rescued me, when I was already well into gradu-

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Letters

ate school, with a simple phrase. She insisted I memorize poetry. I insisted, like any smart-assed grad student, that rote memorization was the death of cognitive liberty. She snorted and said, "If you carry the poems around in your head, you can suck on them." I suddenly saw with complete clarity.

Anyway, Beran punched a few of my buttons. Thanks.

Mark C. E. Peterson
University of Wisconsin

To the editor:

I read "In Defense of Memorization" with great interest. I will soon be in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to teach English. My employer wants its teachers to act as "guides on the side" in the classroom, eschewing traditional educational methods—memorization—in favor of "individual discovery." I have a question for people with this philosophy: If students just exercise creativity and inquisitiveness, are they expected to come up independently with the works of Frost, Dickens, Hugo, Dante, etc.? Did those authors' works come from creativity alone, or did they memorize the language and build their skills that way? To me, it's like saying we can put students who can't drive into a car, let them be creative, and see what happens. *Anthony Retford*
Via e-mail

The Gang Epidemic

To the editor:

I would like to thank Heather Mac Donald for "The Immigrant Gang Plague" [Summer 2004]. As a Mexican-American born in South Side Chicago's Brighton Park, I see how the gang problem is destroying our cities and our nation.

My family was among the first Hispanic families to move to (predominantly Lithuanian and Polish) Brighton Park in the 60s, and we were not treated like foreigners. I can remember how quiet and pristine the neighborhood used to be. People would sit on their front porches while kids rode Big Wheels up and down the block.

This neighborhood is now a war zone. I can hear sporadic gunfire as I sit in my living room. Broken glass and used condoms litter the sidewalks. It is impossible to park on my street now, since there are five families in each house, all with cars lacking plates, city stickers, and insurance. This is tolerated because King Richard Daley always gets the Hispanic vote.

The Mexican government held a conference last month about helping illegals into America to become U.S. citizens so that they can vote several states out of the Union. I know this sounds crazy, but it's true and was even covered on Univision and Telemundo.

Thanks for an outstanding article. *Mark Gutierrez*
Chicago, IL

To the editor:

I live in Chicago, which has a huge illegal population and an ongoing gang problem. The jails can't hold them all. Our school system is bursting at the seams. Even the ones who work use some kind of public assistance (which comes out of my paycheck, thank you very much). I am afraid to drive in my own neighborhood: they operate motor vehicles with no license or insurance, and if they hit you, they just take off.

In the long run, illegal immigration takes out much more than what it puts in to our economy. I am sick and tired of our spineless government being too scared to enforce our laws so as not to offend certain groups of people.

Daniel J. Williams
Via e-mail

To the editor:

I am a 71-year-old Mexican-American who has experienced the deterioration of towns and cities due to gangs. I am a retired psychiatric social worker with work experience in jails and prisons, and also as a drug-abuse counselor.

Everything in Ms. Mac Donald's report rings true based on my observations in California, Arizona, and now Colorado.

James Jorquez
Via e-mail

To the editor:

Heather Mac Donald has done a good job of exposing the folly of open borders. In my town, the police know who the gang members are, but they can't ask their citizenship status and certainly can't arrest them: Portland is a "sanctuary" city. Of course, citizens need a sanctuary from the increasing brutality of the gangs, but our politicians know best.

The insanity starts in the school system. My daughter

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Letters

teaches in a public school with approximately 50 employees. Only 17 are regular teachers. The rest are interpreters, ESL teachers, counselors, psychologists. The children even have their own attorneys if needed, courtesy of the taxpayer. Three of the regular teachers have decided to become ESL teachers. And why not? They will have small classes and not be accountable to anyone if the kids don't learn. Teachers are required to send written material home in the household's native language. This is probably a waste of time; most parents don't communicate with the school or show up for conferences. Few of these kids will actually learn English at school, as their instruction time is scant—about 30 minutes every other day. Recently, the school's cafeteria sported signs in three other languages above the sign HOT DOGS. Our tax dollars at work. *Barbara Anderson*
Portland, OR

The Next Great Liberal Reform

To the editor

Robert P. George and David L. Tubbs's argument against gay marriage ["Redefining Marriage Away," Summer 2004] is incredibly weak: gays will cheat on their partners and therefore lead heterosexuals into temptation? According to the U.S. Census, roughly half of all marriages *already* end in divorce. Are gays to blame for that, too?

They are just small-minded homophobes trying to rationalize their fear of people unlike themselves. Marriage is both a legal contract and a statement of commitment. It has nothing to do with breeding (by the way, I am a married breeder). And it has nothing to do with God, either. Frankly, it's none of your business who marries whom. *Paul Stuart*
Via e-mail

Robert P. George & David L. Tubbs respond:

The institution of marriage has been badly wounded by various pathologies abroad in our culture. A number of these pathologies are the result of legal changes introduced by liberal reformers. One particularly bad idea was the abolition of "fault" divorce standards. Were "gays" to blame? No. Liberals were. They asked: Why should someone who wants out be compelled by law to stay in a "loveless" marriage? Liberal reformers failed to see that the introduction of "no fault" divorce would dramatically alter people's understanding of what it was they were committing to when they got married. The resulting epidemic of broken families has been a disaster, especially for the children of divorce. It came as a shock to liberal reformers when legal change had a profound cultural effect.

Now the liberals who "reformed" our divorce laws have come up with another bright idea: same-sex "marriage." This time, their "reform" will not simply damage the institution of marriage; it will ultimately abolish it. If the requirement of sexual complementarity is jettisoned, with it will go any basis of moral principle for the legal norms of monogamy and sexual exclusivity. Honest and clear-thinking supporters of same-sex "marriage," such as George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley and Princeton historian Hendrik Hartog, admit this. As for marriage being "none of your business": isn't the point of a social institution that it is everyone's business?

Wal-Mart: Good for Business

To the editor:

I loved Steven Malanga's "What Does the War on Wal-Mart Mean?" [Spring 2004]—especially its discussion of Wal-Mart's suppliers. My dad runs operations and finance for an old, old Texas spice company, and had no experience in selling at that kind of scale. Well, Wal-Mart did; and their regional buyer—rather than wave her hand and say, "You don't know how to do this, begone!"—actually stepped them through the process of preparing a bid.

My dad doesn't like Wal-Mart on principle. (I remember what jackasses the local hardware and auto-parts stores were, and I think Wal-Mart is wonderful.) But he sure likes how much of his products they stand to sell. *Brent Ruple*
Via e-mail

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The Prince of Poisoners

Theodore Dalrymple

I recently traveled to Stafford, one of the many English market towns that used to be beautiful. A few years of bureaucratic town planning, however, have destroyed centuries of harmonious construction. Ceauşescu could hardly have done worse.

Finding myself with some time, I went to the large, half-timbered Elizabethan house in the town center to see an exhibition held there, dedicated to Dr. William Palmer, the Prince of Poisoners. Palmer was hanged outside the Stafford jail—still a prominent local landmark—in 1856, before a crowd of 30,000. As Stafford's population at the time was only 12,000, he obviously helped stimulate the local economy. In a small way, he still does: a local beer bears his name, an inn hangs pictures of places associated with him in its bar, and at the exhibition, one could buy (as I did) Palmer memorabilia, such as notebooks and postcards. (The tombstones of his 14 or 15 victims were popular subjects for Victorian postcards.)

Though a doctor, Palmer preferred horse racing to medicine and got into terrible debt. He forged his mother's signature on many loan notes, and when they fell due, he poisoned people whose lives he had insured shortly before or who had a lot of cash on them. He poisoned his mother-in-law in the delusory hope of a legacy. He purportedly poisoned quite a few of his own children, legitimate and otherwise, as well, because they proved an expense that he could ill afford.

Palmer's life and death gave rise to an entire genre of artifacts, now known as Palmeriana, ranging from reports of his trial to Staffordshire china figurines and reproductions of his death mask. I have a small collection myself. Robert Graves published a novel, written on the centenary of his execution, entitled *They Hanged My Saintly Billy* (a quotation from Palmer's forgiving mother). The radical editor of *The Lancet* in Palmer's day, Thomas Wakley, also took up the pen on his behalf, in a pamphlet with the strong though not succinct title of *The Cries of the Condemned or Proofs of the Unfair Trial and (if Executed) the Legal Murder of William Palmer Lately Sentenced to Die on a Charge of Poisoning; and Reasons Why He Should Not Be Hanged . . . Including a Strong Parallel Case of the Uncertainty of Circumstantial Evidence, the Weakness of Human Judgement, and the Danger of Sacrificing Innocent Life*. My own favorite, though, is the *Illustrated Life, Career and Trial of William Palmer . . . , Containing Details of His Conduct as Schoolboy, Medical Student, Racing-Man, and Poisoner*, published with many wonderful engravings in the year of his execution.

Then as now a taste for the sensational had to dress up as something with a higher purpose. The book begins: "If the lives of the great and good are deserving of being written about for the admiration of succeeding generations, and to excite those who study them to the practice of brave and virtuous actions, the careers of great criminals are equally worthy of being recorded, that their misdeeds may become the abhorrence of posterity, and that all who ponder over their wretched courses may take warning by the rapid progress with which, after the first false step, they too surely enter upon their downward path of crime."

The average age of people at the exhibition was about 60. Many young people walked by outside, but none entered. Could the fame of the Prince of Poisoners be dying out?

My taxi driver on the way to the exhibition was roughly my age. I asked about Palmer, and his eyes glistened with local pride. Everyone in his day knew all about Palmer. But, he said, youngsters today—they're interested only in discos and clubs.

Sure enough, my taxi driver back from the exhibition was a young man in his twenties. What did he know about William Palmer? The name rang no bells. I mentioned that he had been a famous, or infamous, local poisoner, hanged outside the jail, but it was clear that my driver thought me a little touched.

Durkheim observed that society needed its delinquents so that it could express its solidarity. Oddly enough, public behavior in Stafford has grown worse, more coarse and violent, as awareness of Palmer has waned. ■

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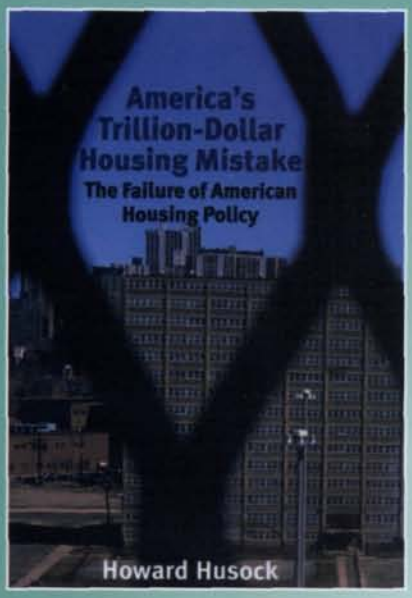

Howard Husock, *America's Trillion-Dollar Housing Mistake*
Ivan R. Dee, 2003 [ISBN: 1566635314]
"a provocative thinker and a burst of fresh air"
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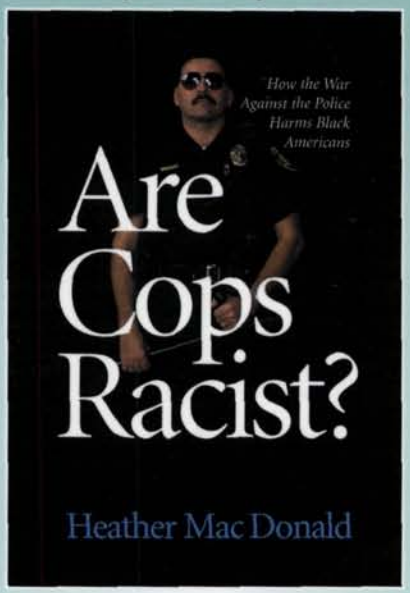
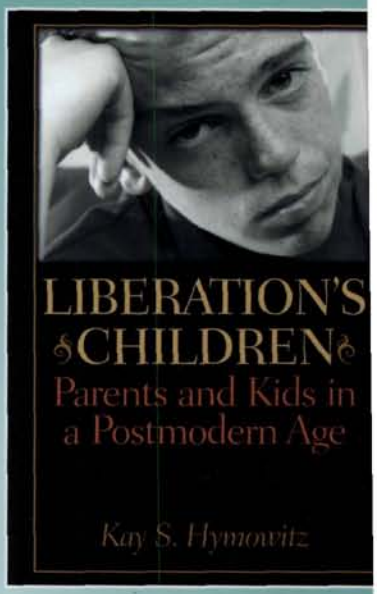
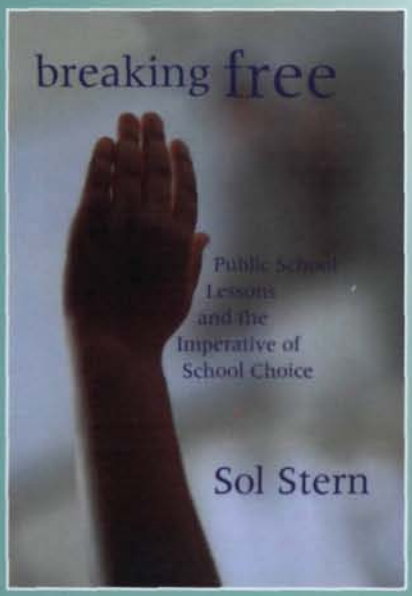


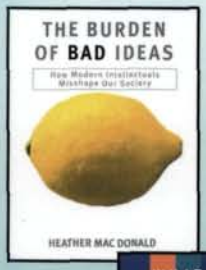


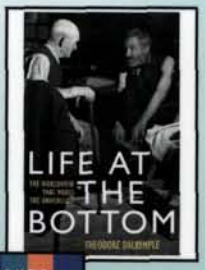
Kay S. Hymowitz, *Liberation's Children*
Ivan R. Dee, 2003 [ISBN: 1566634954]
"both engaging a
brutal as social observati
-*Washington P*

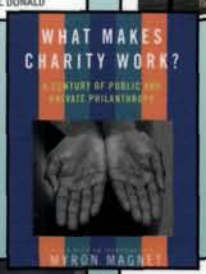
Sol Stern, *Breaking Free*
Encounter Books, 2003 [ISBN: 1893554074]
"If you can think of modern public education as a kind of inferno . . . then Sol Stern is a modern-day Dante."
-Justin Torres, *The Weekly Standard*

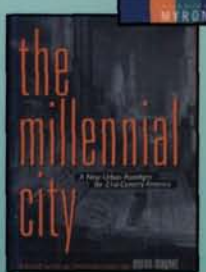


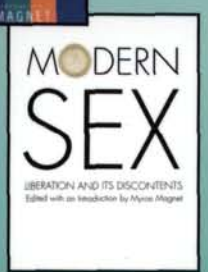
And bear in mind:











Victor Davis Hanson, *Mexifornia*
Encounter Books, 2003 [ISBN: 189355473
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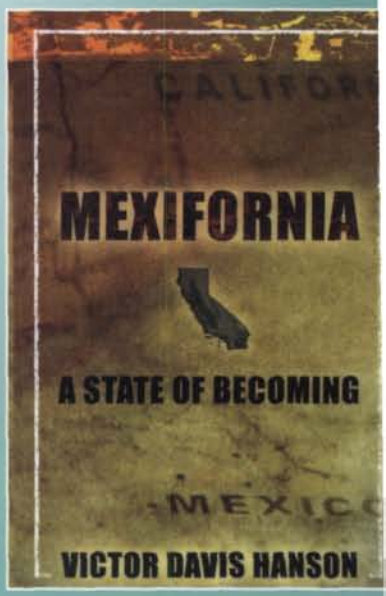
-William A. Rusher, *National Revi*



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